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THE RELIGION OF BABYLONIA AND ASSYRIA

CUNEIFORM PARALLELS TO THE OLD TESTAMENT

A HISTORY OF BABYLONIA AND ASSYRIA

THE RECOVERY OF THE ANCIENT ORIENT

Great Characters Of the Old Testament

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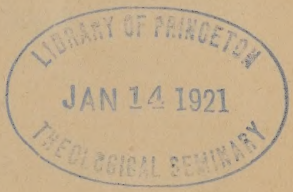

THE METHODIST BOOK CONCERN
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TO THE READER

READ THIS BEFORE YOU READ THE BOOK

"To know Jesus Christ, and him crucified." There is no knowledge so important, so lofty, so profound, so transforming, so enduring as this, both for this world and for the next. To gain this knowledge we must apply first to the New Testament, then to the witness of the saints, then to our own personal experience sought in prayer and perfected in meditation and in the doing of the Lord's commands. The Christian life is founded in and rests upon this knowledge. To know Jesus Christ is in its beginnings the simplest and easiest of all forms of knowledge. He makes himself known to all who seek him in truth, nor turns any away. Other forms of knowledge are often difficult and sometimes impossible to secure. If we go to an astronomer to ask knowledge of astronomy he may question our fitness to acquire it. He may learn by questioning that we lack the preliminary knowledge of, or aptness for, mathematics, without which we should never attain a grasp of the intricate movements in the starry heavens, and then he may shake his head and say, "Astronomy is not for you." But behold a mystery,

the Lord turns none away in this fashion. His answer is yea and amen to all who come. He will make himself known in a personal experience to all. But when this is done, the learner must give a life to learning, for the New Testament is rich and full, and there are daily new treasures to be sought and found therein, nor is the longest life sufficient to exhaust them.

Shall we stop there? Nay, we shall not, for there is an insistent call to travel far back over the years that preceded the Lord's coming. We shall need to remember that there is also in the Bible an Old Testament, and that we shall never know the New without a knowledge of the Old. We must remind ourselves that the Lord himself fed and feasted his own soul upon the Old Testament, whose books were to him the Scriptures. They have never been displaced. They are still the Scriptures and no fully rounded, mature, rich, and effective Christian life has ever yet been built save by calling them in to the aid of the New Testament in forming it.

The New Testament looks backward to the Old, and as the Old was once a schoolmaster to bring the Jews to Christ (Gal. 3. 24), so it is still a schoolmaster to enlarge our knowledge of Christ. We are indeed no longer under its schoolmastership as slaves, for faith has made us free (Gal. 3. 25), yet to know Christ as he was on earth and as he now is as a risen

Saviour we must have recourse to his Scriptures, even the Old Testament. There are many of his sayings, much of the background of his life, very much of what his disciples, or the apostles, or the evangelists, or other writers taught of him which would otherwise remain obscure or incomprehensible. If you could take a New Testament and paste a piece of white paper over every Old Testament allusion, every name, every hint, you would find yourself in the possession of a book without order or continuity. The issue, then, of this little message of mine is that to know Jesus Christ you must know the Old Testament as well as the New.

To give you the bidding to learn the Old Testament is indeed to bid you to a great and glorious feast, and you will need your life for its complete enjoyment. There need be no discouragement in that. It is your privilege to learn as much as you may, and as you may, but you must make a beginning, else shall you never obtain what you might and should. To help you begin, to conduct you gaily, happily, cheerily, a little way upon your journey, I have written this little book. I give it into your hands, and ask you to receive it, study it, make it your own. It is intended to make you sufficiently acquainted with Abraham, Moses, David and Isaiah, that they may seem familiar friends when their names appear in the New Testament,

and even to help you to recognize in the sweet flowing river of New Testament truth little currents that have come straight and true from prophets like Amos and Ezekiel, or Jeremiah, greatest of them all.

I commend this little book to you, not for its sake, but for yours. I have written it for you out of a heart full of love for the Scriptures of the Old Testament and from a mind which has dwelt many years upon these precious things and dwelt joyously. To know even so much as this book tells would be well worth all that its learning might cost you in time and thought and patience. To graduate out of this book into larger and better books unto a richer, fuller knowledge, that were indeed a boon greatly to be desired, and happy should I be if I ever heard that one of you, yea even *one*, had journeyed thus far, having begun in this humble way with me.

Come, I take your hand, and place the little book in it. As you take it I am looking carefully about to see what else you have near at hand. Do I not see your Bible? Ah, you shall not come forward into knowledge without that as a constant companion, its pages turned more frequently than the leaves of this little book.

ROBERT W. ROGERS.

CHAPTER I

ABRAHAM, THE PIONEER

FOUR thousand years and six thousand miles away is Abraham. It is a far cry to that pioneer, but to traverse the centuries backward up the long roll of time is a fascinating task for the imagination, and to travel over land and sea to visit the countries known to Abraham in Babylonia, Canaan and Egypt will set our wandering feet in many interesting places. Let us make the journey, seeking always to try to see Abraham more plainly as one with whom we greatly need acquaintance, and with whom a friendship is richly rewarding. Our plan should be to follow his life story, observing his deeds, and then at the end seek to bring all the little lines together to form a portrait.

Early Days. Abraham spent his youth in Ur of the Chaldees, far away in southern Babylonia. Whether his home was actually in the city proper, or in the country outside its massive walls, we do not know, nor does it much matter, for whether within or without the walls he must be counted a city man, and not a country man, for the city's influence

was over the whole region in which it was situated, just as the influence of New York or of Chicago spreads many miles beyond its last lines of streets. Ur was one of the oldest cities in the land, the head for centuries of a city kingdom. It had immense buildings, the greatest of them dedicated to the worship of the Moon as a god under the name of Nannar. The vast ruins of the city still lie unexplored upon the Babylonian plain, but some day men will excavate the great mound and come home to tell us how lay its streets, how were its temple courts, and perhaps even how its citizens lived in their brick houses. The inhabitants of the city we call Babylonians, but many of them belonged to a race called Sumerians, and mingled with them before Abraham's day were perhaps strains of other origin. Abraham's family were neither Sumerians nor yet Semitic Babylonians. They belonged to a stock now called Aramæans, and their ancestors came probably from Arabia to settle as tillers of the soil or as workers and traders among the other people.

Abraham was surrounded by people who went often to the great temple of Nannar in Ur, and the wider, if not narrower, circles of his own family would be worshipers of that deity. Later generations of the Hebrew people who looked back proudly to Abraham as their father, remembered to say: "Your fathers dwelt of old time beyond the River,

even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nahor and they served other gods" (Josh. 24. 2). We must imagine Abraham's people entering that great temple to offer sacrifice to the Moon and to hear priests chanting the praises of the god in a hymn, preserved to our own day, which begins thus:

O Lord, chief of the gods, who alone is exalted on earth and in heaven.
Father Nannar, Lord, Anshar, chief of the gods.
Father Nannar, Lord, great Anu, chief of the gods,

and so on line after line calling the names of other gods, and then going on to declare,

Thy word sounds on high like a storm wind, and food and drink do abound,
Thy word sounds over the earth, and vegetation springs up.
Thy word makes stall and stable fat, and multiplies living creatures.

That is an expression of polytheism, and there was no power in it to develop into anything higher, nor indeed did the religion of Babylonians or of Sumerians or of Aramæans ever rise above polytheism into monotheism, the worship of one God alone.

We are all deeply influenced by our neighbors, whether we will or not, and it is almost a certainty that if Abraham were to live his life in or about Ur he would have small chance of ever moving out and over this very imperfect faith into a nearer,

truer, safer view of God. It was therefore natural that God should move upon him to quit home, country and friends and seek a new place to live where, free of the old influences, he might hear God's voice in his inmost soul. He was to become a pioneer in the world of a new and better knowledge of God, of a larger, purer faith. So he heard God calling him, heard him not with the outer but with the inner ear, saying, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto the land that I will show thee" (Gen. 12. 1). That was a great and sore demand to make of Abraham, to exchange the certainties of a comfortable life in a civilized land to go out into the uncertainties of a land to him unknown. The promise made to him (Gen. 12. 2, 3) was that (*a*) he should become a great nation, (*b*) that his name should be great and (*c*) that in him "*all the families of the earth should be blessed.*" But these were remote ideals, not sober realities. He was asked to give up home and friends then in his actual possession that he might be the ancestor of a great nation. But he would not be alive to enjoy the fame of that position! He would not live to hear his name pronounced great, as we do now pronounce it, and that all the families of the earth should be blessed in him. That was the very height of unselfishness to ask him to forsake his all in a living present for a dream of

future good to all the world. Surely no man was ever called to give up more to attain an ideal fame after death.

Yet Abraham accepted that call of God and set out for Canaan. We must not think of him as traveling along steadily and swiftly toward a definite goal, like some modern immigrant. Rather does Abraham serve as type and representative of a large family, even a tribe moving slowly with flocks and herds and many possessions and taking years to cover the distance from Ur to the hills of Canaan, a journey of a thousand miles.

The Land of Canaan. When next we see Abraham he is in Canaan, having stopped at Harran on the way thither. Two places in the land are associated with his name: an oak tree near Shechem—the most beautiful spot in Palestine—and the other the somewhat bare hill tops between Bethel and Ai. Canaan was not so fertile a land as his old home country, but subject to famines caused by lack of rain, and such a famine drove Abraham on into Egypt, where he was kindly treated (Gen. 12. 10-19); but in order to escape a supposed threatened danger on account of his wife he planned and told a deliberate lie to the king. Lying is even yet not so much hated in the East as we hope it is among us, and in Abraham's time was probably common enough. This will serve

to explain, while it does not justify his conduct. It is well, however, for us to remember that this is told so frankly about the great hero Abraham—a characteristic of the Holy Scriptures—and it is well also for us to accept a caution from it, and to build up in ourselves a character not easily tempted to the base and ignoble trick of lying.

Upon Abraham's return from Egypt he halted between Bethel and Ai and there "called on the name of Jehovah" (Gen. 13:4), or, in other words, offered worship to God. He that had lied in Egypt needed to draw nigh to God for help, for restoration and for strength for the future. Here he manifests the religious mind, and shows that his nature is capable of communion with the Highest. It is not so much what Abraham has been as what Abraham may be that is important, and the hope of a great improving change in him lies in close continued communion with God. And this which is Abraham's duty, privilege, hope and opportunity, and is true of him, is likewise true of the rest of us.

The test of Abraham quickly followed the day of his worship. Abraham was accompanied by his nephew Lot, and the poor limestone soil on the hill tops near Bethel gave little promise of food for men or for cattle. It was obvious that they must separate, the one choosing to go somewhere else, while the other remained to take what there should offer.

I have had the view from those hill tops and am able to testify that anybody with searching and eager eyes could see at once that it would be wise to choose the great deep valley of Jordan, luxuriant in vegetation, well watered, and bathed in a flood of sun. Abraham as senior in years, and the leader of them all, had the right of first choice. Selfishness would demand that he take it. He did not, but gave the choice to Lot, who seized the best, as he saw the best. But the choice of land is not the easiest and safest thing in the world, for land means neighbors of some sort, and in the end Lot found himself among bad neighbors, and as a direct result was exposed to the danger of a raid which passed over the very place where he had settled.

The Great Raid. The next episode in Abraham's life brings him into contact with the larger world of the Oriental kingdoms, and somebody has written down a very vivid story of it (Gen. 14). Four kings from the great Euphrates valley came down into the Jordan valley to plunder goods and cattle and put the people under bonds to pay an annual tribute, or rather to renew the payment of a tribute exacted of them fourteen years before. The names of these kings have now been identified or explained in part, for it appears that Amraphel, king of Shinar, is intended for Hammurapi, king of Babylon, and Arioch, king of Ellasar, is Eri-Aku, king of Larsa,

while Chedorlaomer would be the same as Kudur-lagamaru of Elam, though such a king has not yet been quite definitely located, nor has Tidal, king of the Goiim or nations. In their raid these kings, or the raiding parties which they sent out, swept up Lot and his family in their net and carried them off into slavery. This brought another test to Abraham. He was safe enough on his broad plain below the hill tops, and if selfishness were to rule his life he might settle down in stolid comfort and let Lot go to his fate. Instead of that he beat up a small body of mobile detachments from some of his neighbors, took the road in pursuit, fought a victorious fight and brought Lot and his family and goods safely home (Gen. 14. 1-16). Well done! On his way homeward Abraham met two men of quite different quality and dealt with them as their quality deserved. The king of Sodom wished to bestow on Abraham the spoils of the assault upon the Oriental kings, but met a refusal. The high-minded Abraham would have none of it for himself, but saw carefully to it that the men who accompanied him should be rewarded. The other meeting was with Melchizedek, king of Salem, that is Jerusalem, and to him Abraham paid honors, gave tithes as to a religious leader and from him accepted a blessing. It was a significant moment and much was made of it in later days (Psa. 110. 4; Heb. 5. 10 and 7. 1-10),

for as men looked back to him he seemed to them to afford an analogy with the Lord Jesus himself—and that is the greatest honor he could have.

The Heavenly Visitors. As Abraham sat under the friendly shelter of a great tree, in the heat of the day, at home again near Hebron, he saw approaching three men, whom he received as weary, footsore travelers, to whom he owed the duty of hospitality. To them he gave water to wash away the dust of the roads, and good food to stay their faintness, and then entered into friendly speech with them. As the swift and tense moments pass by it comes at length into the comprehension that these visitors are not ordinary travelers, but that One among them is none other than divine, an appearance of God, a theophany, and that he speaks gravely of the divine displeasure with the wicked folk of Sodom who are to be destroyed. The compassion of Abraham is aroused, and with it a sense of justice, which urges him to plead that the good should not perish with the wicked. Nowhere else does Abraham appear so dignified yet so simple, so bold yet so deferential, so much a man yet so nobly disposed, so humane, so rich in the large-minded absorption in the affairs of others. Let me not spoil the story by transferring it into modern speech. Do you the rather read it (Gen. 18), while you remember that it has been well and truly said that "few passages

in the Old Testament narrative can rival it in simplicity, vividness, and grace of style."

The Divine Revelations. There are three passages which belong together, three great revelations of God to Abraham, and in every one there sounds and resounds as a refrain the promise of descendants who should become a great nation. In the first of these (Gen. 15) there is a vision introduced by the splendid words, "Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, *and* thy exceeding great reward." Then in this vision God makes a covenant with him, and the covenant is expressed in a solemn ceremony of sacrifice, the forms of which have come down from a remote antiquity. Abraham receives from God the assurance not only of a progeny great, numerous and distinguished, but of a land sufficient for their habitation. The second of these passages (Gen. 17) takes also the form of a covenant, but this time the token of the covenant is not the slain animals, as before, but the command to introduce the rite of circumcision into the family institutions, making it henceforth the outward sign of the dedication of the male members of the future family, or race, to God. The rite of circumcision was not now introduced for the first time. It was ancient, widespread and highly esteemed as a national badge. With the transfer to Abraham's family of this sacred rite there was given also the promise of a son to

Abraham, who should be the forerunner of the new race, promised before. The third of these episodes (Gen. 22. 1-19) reaches a grave and solemn climax, well worthy of a pause in our thought. Abraham heard in the inner ear of the soul a command to sacrifice his only son Isaac. He accepted this as an order from God and set about obeying it. This is for us a hard saying. If you thought you ought to sacrifice a son, the son would certainly not yield his consent, and the community would step into the controversy, forbid it, and shut you up as a lunatic. But Abraham found no such opposition either from son or from community. Nobody would now believe that God would order you or me to sacrifice a son. How, then, shall we explain Abraham's acts and thoughts? The answer is that Abraham lived in a time and among people who believed in and practiced human sacrifice. This custom, now deemed hideous, was widely spread, and few if any declared it wrong. As the peoples about him were sacrificing their first born, it would not shock Abraham's moral sense, as it would ours, to come to the understanding that God would have him sacrifice Isaac. It is easy to see how neighboring Canaanites might taunt him, saying, "I have sacrificed to my Baal mine only son; you have not sacrificed your only son to your God; you do not give your best to your God, as I gave my best to mine." So it came about that Abraham

understood that God made this supreme demand upon him. Here, then, we see that though Abraham had made great advances in the knowledge of God beyond the people of Ur of the Chaldees, he was still very imperfectly acquainted with God's nature as we now know it, else had he never felt himself called to a test so horrible. From its execution he was spared. He did not slay his son, but under the symbol of a slain animal satisfied the demand which he had heard within. Here, then, was a test not only of Abraham, in the willingness to give his best, but a test also of the religion which he was to represent. If this religion was to order and approve child sacrifice it would perish as have all the religions which in Canaan or thereabouts once practiced it. But the name of Abraham is forever linked with a religion which was, after many struggles and much admonition from the prophets, to free itself from even the occasional practice of this ghastly barbarity. Abraham was not to be a child-sacrificer, not an adherent of the older and baser forms, but a man ready to be attached to the higher and the better. From the incident let us not fail to see that Abraham was not yet made perfect. His faith is in some ways imperfect, even primitive. It was not possible for God to make himself known to him in the sense in which Isaiah was to know him, still less could he know God as the Lord Jesus should

later reveal him. In Abraham we are at the beginning of the faith.

This Man's Character. From the great mists of the distant past we have seen a very noble figure to appear. Many and beautiful are his virtues, rich and fair the adornment which the gifted writers of the Bible have given him. (1) He is a man of great generosity (Gen. 13. 10, 11). (2) He exercises in noble fashion the gracious gift of hospitality (Gen. 18. 1-8). (3) He is profoundly religious, and all his acts and words breathe the delicate odor of worship and devotion. Well, indeed, may Israel be proud of him, happy indeed are we to have such a father after the spiritual, if not after the physical—Abraham, Friend of God.

Suggestions for Study

1. The Bible. Read Gen. 11. 10 to 25. 10.

2. The Commentaries. See Driver (Westminster Commentaries); Ryle (*Cambridge Bible for Schools*).

3. The Histories. Sanders, *History of the Hebrews.* Wade, *Old Testament History.* Peritz, *Old Testament History.*

CHAPTER II

MOSES, THE FOUNDER OF THE NATION

After the days of Abraham there elapsed about seven hundred and fifty years before the appearance of Moses. Between Abraham and Moses many generations of men lived among the people of Israel and very few of them were remembered, their names preserved for honor in later days. The Hebrew people, like all other peoples, had few, very few great men. The final test of greatness is never made in a man's life. Men are lightly called great, but when they are dead and gone from sight all but the few rare spirits are quickly forgotten. To all others the test of time has been applied and forgetfulness has passed upon them. This does not mean that they, whose names are forgotten, lived in vain. Far from it. They did their work, whatever it was, and the results of it lived after them. They created useful objects, devised plans for the conquest of the rude forces of nature, built machines, simple or complex, made roads for man and beast, improved the conditions of life through the winning of regular supplies of food and the providing of shelter

against cold and wet. Every man who made any personal contribution to any of these was not living in vain. He was helping to set humanity forward on the road of progress. Any contribution to the supplying of man's physical wants is useful in setting free man's energy for the making of governments, the acquiring of knowledge, the building up of moral customs or laws, and the seeking to know God and his will concerning men. If any man works at something useful, lives decently, rears his children to be useful in their turn, maintains a standard of honesty and truth for himself and his family, he is assuredly helping men upward, and is just as truly deserving of praise and honor as is the great man who can assume the leadership of a whole people.

Greatness. All this is indeed true, yet greatness has a great place in human thinking and ought to have. Carlyle spoke truly when he said, "Great men are profitable company," and the real significance of the remark lies in this, that great men help to lift all others, not indeed to their level of greatness, yet above the lower level from which they had come. They afford lesser men something to think about, so that they are stirred to greater aspirations. This is what Johnson had in mind when he said, "A man would never undertake great things could he be amused with small." If we know nothing but small

things we shall go on doing small things and being satisfyingly amused by them. If we know great things we shall try to do great things ourselves, and the sight of a great man before the eye of the mind is the surest way of coming to know great things. Here is a great man for us to look at. Moses is a supremely great man. He is indeed worth looking at, and looking very closely. He will at least give us a lift out of the "gloomy calm of idle vacancy."

His Childhood. Moses was born in Egypt, but he was not an Egyptian. Birthplace does not confer nationality or change race. Moses was a Hebrew, for his father, Amram, and his mother, Jochebed, were Hebrews. He had a brother named Aaron and a sister named Miriam. They did not live among the Egyptians, but in a small section of Egypt named Goshen, where the inhabitants were generally, perhaps almost exclusively, Hebrews. They were as much shut off socially from the Egyptians as are many little communities in America in which live Greeks or Syrians or even Scandinavians. There are some dangers in methods like that in any country, and some of these dangers came to the Hebrews in Egypt, in the district of Goshen. The Hebrews have usually been industrious and frugal, as are many of them to-day in different parts of the world. And industrious and frugal people get on and up in the world and soon excite the envy of others. It

was so in Egypt. Their prosperity, aloofness, and growth in comfort excited the envy and cupidity and fear of the Egyptians, and the king took violent means to repress them. His first move was to draft their men into compulsory field labor for the Egyptians (Exod. 1. 14), and into the hard task of building two store cities on the edge of the northeastern desert—Pithom was one and the other named Rameses, in his honor, for this was Rameses II (B. C. 1292-1225). These store cities were to be used to house grain for Egyptian troops if any Asiatic power should attack Egypt on that vulnerable quarter. Not content with exploiting their labor, the Egyptian taskmasters who had the Hebrews in charge required of them oppressive and cruel demands, and beat them when these were unfulfilled. As these methods did not appear to reduce the numbers of the Hebrews with sufficient speed to satisfy the king or his advisers, an attempt was made to limit the further increase of their numbers by slaying male children. It was at this juncture that Moses was born, and his mother, fearing that he would be taken from her, hid him in a little covered basket, made watertight, and left him in the river. There he was found by a daughter of the king, and as a consequence of that happy providence was reared in the house of the princess, but had his own mother as his nurse. The opportunity was thus given him to gain the knowl-

edge which Egypt was ready to impart but for which a large opportunity would come only to the royal house, or to the families of the priesthood. The name Moses, by which we know the young man of great opportunities, is pronounced in Hebrew Mosheh and is connected because of popular etymology with the Hebrew word which means to "draw out," and hence by popular supposition suggests the rescue of Moses from the water. The Greek form of Moses seems, however, much more probably to suggest that the original form of his name was Egyptian and not Hebrew, was indeed Mes, or Mesu, and meant simply "son." The explanation would be that his parents did not dare to give him a genuine Hebrew name, but were unwilling to give him an Egyptian name with some heathen signification and therefore adopted the colorless name "son."

Manhood. When Moses had come to manhood he saw a Hebrew fellow countryman suffering at the hands of an Egyptian, and in the heat of a sudden indignation killed the oppressor, and hid his body. Murder was bad enough in the eyes of the Egyptians, but it was even worse to hide the body, for this prevented the man's family from mummifying the body and so fulfilling the rites of the Egyptian religion, and enabling the soul to be reunited with the body. Later Moses came to believe that he was

under suspicion, and fled the country to hide in the peninsula of Sinai, among a people called Midianites. There he married a daughter of a priest-chieftain who bore him two sons, Gershom and Eliezer. Her name was Zipporah, but her father's name is uncertain to this day, for he is variously called Jethro, Reuel or Hobab. This uncertainty is one of many instances which reveal the human element in Holy Scripture. The Bible is not concerned about these little matters, which do not affect its main purpose, and its main purpose is always religion.

The Call. In this land of seclusion there came to Moses a revelation of God which lifted him out of his quiet satisfactions and ease with wife and children and made him think once more of his fellow countrymen in Egypt under the oppressor's heel. It is usually a divine call that sets men out on errands of mercy to the downtrodden, and it has often been in the wilderness in solitary places or even in deserts that these calls have come. In this instance the call is pictured most graphically before our eyes as a burning bush, which Moses approached awestruck, and there heard the call of God to return to Egypt and secure the deliverance of his people (Exod. 3). Like most great men he shrank at first from the command, for he felt that he had not the tongue of eloquence to enthrall a nation of slaves and set them boldly upon the way of freedom. But

he had an older brother, Aaron, with precisely the quality which was lacking in himself, while other powers resided in him which should enable him to seize the leadership and save his people. He set out upon the return to Egypt accompanied by his wife and his two sons, but after a time sent them all back to his father-in-law, and went forward upon the perilous undertaking in which failure might mean death and was certain at least to destroy all his future.

At Mount Horeb Aaron joined Moses, and without other company or escort they made their way through the burning sands of that desert until the blue waters of the Red Sea showed the way into Egypt, which Moses had forsaken in frightened haste a generation before. Their first task was to rouse the Hebrews in Goshen to a courage which should give some hope of success for the great undertaking. The second was to secure permission from the Egyptian king for them to leave their homes and proceed to the border, and thence three days' journey into the wilderness to hold a feast in honor of their God. It was not a straightforward request, for Moses had no thought of returning if once they could be brought out. The king refused, for Jehovah was not a God whom he recognized.

Then there fell upon Egypt a succession of plagues similar to those which still appear in the land. They

began with the change in the waters of the Nile which made it blood-red in color, and for seven days undrinkable. To this succeeded swarms of frogs, and an intolerable plague of flies, often still to be met in the land, as I have myself experienced. Besides these there were hailstorms, and locusts, and sandstorms, and pestilence. At last patience broke down and the sufferings of the people so maddened them as to compel the king to give way and order the Hebrews to leave a land on which, as he had finally come to believe, they had brought unendurable suffering.

To save themselves from these miseries the Hebrews observed a rite which Moses bade them (Exod. 12. 21-23), which consisted in the slaughter by each household of a lamb or kid and the sprinkling of its blood upon the lintel and side posts of the door of the house. This was a sacrifice, and it is quite likely that it was in practice long before the days of Moses among other peoples, and has now received a new application and an enriched significance, and is called Passover.

The Exodus. In the confusion which the last of the plagues produced the Israelites, assisted even by some of the Egyptian people, rose from their little farmsheds, made a common rendezvous, and toiled away over the desert which bounds Egypt on its northeastern corner. Soon after their departure

the king repented of his resolve and determined to head them off and compel their return. They were now in danger of losing all that had been gained. Before them lay the desert road to freedom, behind them the land which had been changed from a place of refuge from famine in the days of Jacob into a place of intolerable bondage in the days of Moses. When the Egyptian king decided to compel their return he had the means of enforcing his will. He needed only to order the Egyptian army to be set in motion to attack the fleeing fugitives on flank or rear, and those that did not fall in the unequal fighting would be quickly compelled to return to Goshen. Besides this menace there was danger ahead, for from the upper end of the Red Sea to the Mediterranean Sea there stretched a series of forts, and to get out of Egypt the Hebrews must somewhere pass between two of them. It would be easy to deploy a force from any two of them and head off the escaping Israelites. The darkest day in Hebrew history was at hand. The Hebrews apparently must try to pass between two of the forts, for as they faced eastward just south of the forts lay the waters of the Red Sea, and they had no boats to cross it. Then it was that the hearts of the people gave out and their courage fled. They wished themselves back in bondage rather than be compelled to face this crisis, and broke into a wild cry against Moses, "Because

there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? Wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to bring us forth out of Egypt?" (Exod. 14. 11.) To the general difficulty of the situation which he must face Moses had now also disaffection among his people. If they fell into a panic all would be lost. He could only reassure them by words of confidence, *"Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of Jehovah, which he will work for you today"* (Exod. 14. 13). The divine message to them was, *"Go forward."* When they trusted God and trampled down their fears, the divine providence came into operation. Not as they had expected, did God act. He did not destroy the Egyptian army, or counteract its plans, that Israel might slip away between the fortresses. None of the timid hearts could by any possibility have anticipated what actually did happen. It was indeed a spectacle of divine power in glorious action, for "Jehovah caused the sea to go *back* by a strong east wind all the night, and made the sea dry land" (Exod. 14. 21). Over that strip of dry land Israel escaped, slipping past the line of fortresses, and when the Egyptians attempted to follow the returning waters overwhelmed them. Freedom was secured by a providence never to be forgotten.

The exodus is the greatest event in the history of Israel. None other in all that long sweep of ages can

compare with it. Ever afterward did the poets sing of it and the prophets make glowing mention of it. Whenever men were anxious or troubled about the future and in need of an assurance from the Unseen, they were bidden to remember how God delivered their fathers out of the hand of the Egyptians.

From the Red Sea Moses led his people through the sore and heavy wilderness sands till he had brought them within the great mountain circle which we know by the name Sinai, but which is called by another biblical writer Horeb. There they were to be halted until this mob of rescued slaves could be beaten into the orderly semblance of a nation. To achieve this it was necessary that such customs as they had should be so ordered as to form the beginnings of laws; such religious ideas as they possessed should be, to some extent, clarified and then deepened by a new experience of God. In all this their human leader was Moses, and no people ever began a new national existence with a nobler figure as leader. He had risen superior to the grave tests which had already been applied to him, and the past gave assurance that the future would not find him wanting.

Organizing Justice. At Sinai there came to Moses his father-in-law Jethro (or Reuel or Hobab), bringing his wife and the two sons. After Jethro had joined in the rejoicings over the great deliver-

ance at the Red Sea, he had time to survey the condition of the people whom Moses had freed. He noticed that while a certain amount of authority was exercised over the various tribal or family divisions by the elders, none of these was considered as a final authority and that all cases of controversy were carried up to Moses, whose decisions were accepted as of divine authority (Exod. 18. 15, 16; Deut. 1. 17). The burden of this was so great that Moses was physically weighed down by it, and his time consumed by causes sometimes frivolous, often of small moment. Jethro gave the wise advice that Moses should delegate some of his authority to "rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties and rulers of tens," who should have judicial authority over the smaller disputes, reserving for Moses only the final decision in matters of grave moment. This set Moses free to deal with the higher questions of morals and religion, and the results have enriched the world.

Setting Forth Laws. It was at Sinai that the foundations were laid for that code of laws which grew greater as time went by and came at length to be regarded as one of the chief glories of the Hebrew people. The first laws were few and simple. Time and circumstance made more laws necessary as the years rolled on. We must not think of these laws as we read them in Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuter-

onomy as all made and set forth at Sinai. They are indeed connected with the mighty name of Moses, but this is to be interpreted as an expression of the Hebrew people's reverence for their great leader as one who began the making of laws, and the issuing of them, not as one who personally uttered them all.

The narrative of the giving of the first code of laws is full of dramatic intensity. Sinai is a region still shaken by earthquakes, lighted by thrilling flashes of lightning and reverberating to peals of awe-inspiring thunder. Amid such accompaniments the giving of the Law is described, and these are pictured as manifestations of the Will and Power of God. To make this clear to our minds, and to interpret it in terms of our thinking, we shall not probably go astray if we presume that the commands of God were imparted to Moses by internal rather than by external communication. The spirit of man lies open to messages from the Spirit of God, and however much we associate them with the movements of the so-called natural forces, it is probably in the deep silences of the human heart that God makes his wishes known.

However it came, whether by an internal hearing or an external voice, the great law code which we call the Ten Commandments, or the Decalogue, must forever be associated with Sinai and with the person of Moses. Twice over does the Decalogue appear in

the Bible, in Exod. 20. 3-17 and in Deut. 5. 7-21. When we lay these two side by side and compare them we see that they are precisely alike. The main injunctions are practically identical, but these injunctions are in both cases amplified by explanations or justifications. If, for example, we compare the fourth commandment as it is in Exodus with the same commandment as it is in Deuteronomy, we find a great difference. In Exodus the reason assigned for the remembering of the Sabbath Day is that it was God's rest day after the labors of creation, whereas in Deuteronomy the reason given for its observance is that Israel was a servant in Egypt and should therefore be able to sympathize with toilers and be anxious not only to rest, but to give rest to others. There is also a noticeable difference betwen the two forms of the fifth commandment. What do these differences mean? It may safely be regarded as certain that Moses did not give these commandments in two differing forms. These differences must be due to the hands of later servants of God. They are examples of the human element in these divine books. Later lawgivers have expanded the original laws as Moses gave them, for it is to be remembered that in the Hebrew Bible the Ten Commandments are uniformly referred to as the Ten Words. This would seem to imply that they were brief in their original form. Just what

was their original form we cannot pretend to know, but we might venture to make an interesting guess. Perhaps the original form was something like this:

Thou shalt have no other gods before me.
Thou shalt not make for thyself any graven image.
Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.
Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy.
Honor thy father and thy mother.
Thou shalt not kill.
Thou shalt not commit adultery.
Thou shalt not steal.
Thou shalt not bear false witness.
Thou shalt not covet.

However that may be, we can see the central core of the Commandments both in Exodus and Deuteronomy, and we shall do well to reverence them in whatever form they appear. We have not outgrown them. They are yet alive, and their challenge and demand are still upon us. Moses needs no greater monument to his memory than the ascription of these commands in their origin to him.

The Wilderness Wandering. Israel seems to have been at Sinai something less than a year. Then the march began, and before the reorganized marching people there was carried a box, called by the stately name the Ark of the Covenant of Jehovah, whose chiefest content was two tables of stone with the commandments cut upon them. The march was hard and the vicissitudes many, and after a journey

of eleven days (Deut. 1. 2), covering a distance of about one hundred and sixty to one hundred and seventy miles, they came to a halt at Kadesh-barnea on the southern border of the Promised Land. From this point they thought it might be possible to enter Canaan, and spies were sent thence to bring back news of the conditions which might be expected. The report was unfavorable, only one of the spies believing that they might hope for success. Many of them wanted to return to Egypt, and Moses had hard work with them. Then a reversal of feeling came and they were ready to attack. Moses warned with equal wisdom against this foolhardy proposal. They persisted and were defeated. Beaten and discouraged they remained a whole generation ("forty years," Num. 14. 34; 33. 38) in or about Kadesh-barnea. During that time three men of the tribe of Reuben organized a rebellion against Moses, which, though it failed, gives us another instance of this heroic man's struggle against adversity.

The failure to win an entrance into Canaan from the south had discouraged the people, and when the next move was made it was decided to try a move through Edom and Moab and so make for the Promised Land on the east. Refused a peaceful crossing they had to skirt the lands of Edom and Moab, and finally, after many trials, arrived at the river Arnon, between the territory of the Moabites and Amorites.

With the southern wing of the last named they had to fight, and after a victory two of the tribes of Israel, Reuben and Gad, occupied their fertile pasture lands and determined to remain east of the Jordan.

From the heights above the Dead Sea the people of sore trials could now see stretching away to the north and west the fair land which their leaders had long promised them as their future home. But Moses was old and could not lead them into it, nor give help in its conquest and occupation. Joshua, who had already given some proof of his capacity as a military commander (Exod. 17. 9), was solemnly appointed his successor. Then Moses died and was buried in Moab, and the spot made sacred by his dust forgotten (Deut. 34. 6).

A Great Man. There had been no one his equal before, there was to be none his equal ever afterward. We shall do ourselves honor if we honor him. A lonesome figure he is, for the great are ever lonely. His own people he blessed, and his blessing is on us to-day, for the results of his labors have never ceased. His name remained a hallowed memory among his people and when the Lord of Life and Glory walked this earth he also made mention of him and set his own higher teaching in comparison or in extension of this ancient hero. No man could receive a higher honor than that.

Suggestions for Study

The facts of Israel's history in the Mosaic period are clearly presented in Sanders' *History of the Hebrews*, pp. 49-69. George Matheson has a delightful chapter on certain phases of the life and character of Moses under the title, "Moses the Practical" (*Representative Men of the Bible*, pp. 196-217). In Stanley's *History of the Jewish Church*, Lecture V, there are passages of fine characterization of Moses, even though the historic treatment lacks much that more recent study has brought out. But, after all, these and other books are only "helps," some of them crutches. Read the Book of Exodus.

CHAPTER III

SAMUEL, THE KING MAKER

When Moses was dead and his body laid away in a secret place among the lonely fastnesses of Moab's mountains, the people of Israel had to trust their destiny to the hands of Joshua, who was chosen to be their leader. He had been a sort of assistant to Moses, and in that capacity had shown qualities of value, but he was not of the stature of Moses, nor was he ever able to match his mighty forerunner in achievement. But he led the people successfully over Jordan, and his personal courage met the demands made upon it. In a sudden assault upon some Canaanite strongholds he secured victories of great value, and the taking of Jericho and Ai and the victory at Beth-horon against five allied kings (Josh. 10.15-14) displayed boldness in a night advance and dash in the fight. It is, however, to be kept in mind that neither Joshua personally nor the men under his immediate command succeeded in the bold adventure of conquering all Canaan for the people of Israel. The conquest of Canaan was slow, nor was it completely accomplished until long after

Joshua's time, not indeed until Saul, David and Solomon had given their lives to it. The people of Israel in Joshua's day only secured a foothold in Canaan. They settled in little family groups among the original inhabitants wherever opportunity offered, or one or two tribes, like Judah and Simeon, combined forces and fought for the possession of portions of the land. When the people had thus found lodgment in the land they had to sustain themselves against enemies from outside their borders, who took every opportunity to harass them. During the whole period, after Joshua's day, when the Hebrews were loosely governed by men called Judges, such as Gideon, Barak, and Ehud, they were subjected so frequently to raids by peoples like the Moabites, Edomites, and Ammonites that the prevailing note of the times was war and not peace. The prospects for the fulfillment of the high hopes entertained in earlier days seemed gloomy indeed. No one of the Judges had authority over the whole country. Whatever unity had been secured by the organization under Moses was either lost or in danger of being lost. It was indeed a sorry situation, and there was crying need for the appearance of a great man, a man greater than Joshua, a man worthy to set by the side of the glorious figure of Moses. Where was such a man to be found? If he should appear would he lead the people to unity,

to victory over enemies present or future; would he do these great things himself, or would he find somebody able to do them, and give him prestige and authority sufficient to overcome the difficulties sure to be met? These were grave questions. Let us see how they were met. The man of the hour, the man of destiny was Samuel. Well may we take a good look at him. He is worthy of our attention.

The Boy and His Mother. The father in this case, as in so many others, perhaps one might even dare to say in most other cases, amounts to but little in influence. He deserves only a passing word, yet we must not cheat him of this. He was a man of some consequence, for his genealogy is given at considerable length, and this was only done in those days, as it still is, when the family was of some prominence. Samuel's father was named Elkanah, and his grandfather Jehoram, his great grandfather Elihu—and still further back does the pedigree run. Elkanah was evidently a man of substance, for he had two wives—a custom which then was still found in Israel among those whose income was sufficient to bear the added expense. Elkanah was plainly a man who observed the usages of his religion and kept the yearly feasts (Sam. 1. 21). That is all that needs be said for him. It is good, very good, and the man deserves his share in the honor which the son was to bring. But the mother, ah! it is to her

that Israel owes the great and splendid figure of Samuel. It was she who sighed for a son, and could not eat her food in the agony of her desire to possess him; for him she was "in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto Jehovah and wept sore," and as she prayed she pledged her boy, if ever he should be born, unto God, "all the days of his life." And when he was born she refused to go up to Jerusalem with her husband (1 Sam. 1. 22) that she might take care of that precious boy, and as soon as he was old enough, probably after he was twelve years of age, she took him to Jerusalem and presented him to the High Priest with these solemn words: "For this child I prayed; and Jehovah hath given me my petition which I asked of him: therefore also I have granted him to Jehovah; as long as he liveth he is granted to Jehovah" (1 Sam. 1. 27, 28). There he took service in the temple, as a helper to the priests, and every year his dear mother made with her own faithful hands "*a little robe, and brought it to him from year to year, when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice*" (1 Sam. 2. 19). That is one of the most beautiful pictures in the whole Bible. A mother-made boy was Samuel, and that has been the experience of millions of boys since his day, and many of them have been glad to acknowledge the indebtedness, and so long as they lived have poured forth a rising tide of love and

gratitude to mothers, whether they were still in this country or in a better one, that is, an heavenly. When Edward Wyndham Tennant was a nine-year-old lad he wrote this loving and beautiful tribute, with at least some lines of haunting music, simple though much of it is:

I know a face, a lovely face,
As full of beauty as of grace,
A face of pleasure ever bright,
In utter darkness it gives light.
A face that is itself like joy;
To have seen it I'm a lucky boy,
But I've a joy that have few other—
This lovely woman is my mother.

Tennant died fighting at the front when only nineteen years of age, but nineteen years of a mother love like that are better than ninety without it. It is a great career to be a great mother. Hannah filled it with sweet and tender completeness, and her son Samuel is the sufficient proof of it.

The Boy and His God. They who have had good mothers have found that few steps are needful to find the way to God. When Samuel was helper to the priest at Shiloh his mind and heart were open to any message God might give. It was quite natural that he should hear God's voice calling to him in the deep darkness of Canaan's night in the lonely bed in the little temple at Shiloh. Nor was it sur-

prising that Eli the priest should at once recognize that God had really spoken to the boy, calling loudly at that inner ear of the mind, rapping for attention at the inner door of the heart. As the story of the mother's love and care is full of appeal to those who have heart and experience to understand it, so is this story of the vision of God to Samuel full of meaning and rich in stimulus and encouragement to those who have minds and hearts fitted to its message. The revelation of God comes to men who seek it and are ready to receive it; whose hearts have been cleansed, whose hands are clean, who walk in righteousness daily. The vision came to Samuel in a dark time in the national life. "The word of Jehovah was precious in those days; there was no frequent vision" (1 Sam. 3. 1), or, as it really means, "The word of Jehovah was rare in those days, there was no widely spread vision." It is as easy as it is important to understand the reasons for this sad state. Eli the high priest was too old to perform the functions of his double office. He was both priest and judge. He was a ruler in the house of God, and likewise also civil ruler in the little commonwealth. But old age had deprived him of sight and crippled his enterprise, and the duties of his priestly office had fallen into the hands of his two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, selfish, ignoble, grasping, dishonorable sons of a good father.

The father had meant well, but had brought them up ill indeed, for he restrained them not (1 Sam. 3. 13). It is a bad business for anybody to have an indulgent father, who knows not how to restrain. What about their mother? Alas! we know nothing of her, and the guess which I make is that she died when her sons were children and had no time to influence their lives as Hannah the life of Samuel. Whatever the cause, they were evil men, and instead of uplifting were depressing the moral tone of the whole community. When the religious leaders were corrupt, the people were likely to lapse from religious ways, and in such a time God could not draw nigh in visions, in intimate communion with the souls of men. It came to Samuel, not to Hophni and Phinehas, for Samuel was fitted to receive it, and receive it he did. They were not fitted to receive it, and would not have understood it.

A Great Reputation. "And all Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of Jehovah" (1 Sam. 3. 20). A splendid reputation was that, and it might have arisen for general reasons, or it might have some special basis. Let us read another verse and we shall see how very clear was the reason for it. Here it is, "And Samuel grew, and Jehovah was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground" (1 Sam. 3. 19). There's the reason for

his reputation as a prophet. He had not remained a boy in mind, spirit, purpose. He had grown, and as he grew he had maintained such a relation with God that God could support him, use him, make him a servant to all Israel, a messenger to speak for him, a prophet. And that was not the end of the communion with God, but, "Jehovah appeared again in Shiloh; for Jehovah revealed himself to Samuel in Shiloh" (1 Sam. 3. 21). Then from that there followed most naturally the great result that "the word of Samuel came to all Israel" (1 Sam. 4. 1). This reputation would soon become of immense importance to Israel, for it would enable Samuel to do a great service for his country, for no man can do such a service unless the people trust him, and reputation is the basis of trust.

A Great Disaster. The people of Israel had to fight their way to a great destiny, not because they desired so to win it, but because the condition of the times and the acts of their neighbors compelled it. When the attacks made upon them by Moabites, Edomites, and Ammonites had ceased, the Philistines, who lived on the plain by the sea, took their place and harassed the Hebrews so successfully that there was serious danger that they might lose their foothold in Canaan and be scattered and destroyed as a nation. The Philistines invaded their country, and at Ebenezer decisively beat the He-

brews, in a pitched battle, who lost about four thousand men. Then in mad and superstitious folly the Hebrews thought that they could bring the power of Jehovah to bear on their side by bringing the ark of God into the battle, as though that ancient and deeply revered symbol could by any possibility take the place of the unseen spiritual presence of God. As might have been expected they were beaten far worse than before, a larger number were killed, and among them Hophni and Phinehas lost their lives. When that news was brought to him, poor old Eli fell from his seat backward in an agony of despair and died by the breaking of his neck. The ark of God was taken down to Philistia as a battle trophy, and Israel was left to mourn her dead, and to try to find some means of reorganizing the national life, reestablishing the public service of religion and of beginning a new order.

The Agonizing Need. It was now plainly to be seen that collectively the tribes of Israel were no match for the better organized Philistines, and there must have been many who saw and understood. Israel also must achieve a real national unity and secure an organization to bring unity to bear upon the immediate need, and find a leader to head newly developed fighting forces. The times were so full of vexation, mixed with despair, that we have no perfectly consistent narrative of the order of the

rapidly moving events. Did the people first see the need of a king, or did Samuel? The answer to that question is not too clear, but for our practical purpose it does not much matter. In any case and from any viewpoint Samuel was the chief actor, he was the king-maker.

The Chosen King. There are few stories more beautiful than this, preserved for us in the splendid book of Samuel, the story of how Israel found a king. The man who was made king was Saul, and the first time we catch a glimpse of him this is what we see; "a young man and a goodly: and there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he: from his shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people" (1 Sam. 9. 2). What more could be desired? He was young, so that he had time in which to live and do something. He was handsome, and that is a great gift in its influence over men. He was tall, and men who are tall more easily gain ascendancy over their fellows. He was well born, for his family pedigree was distinguished, and that helps men to high rank among other men. He had lived humbly enough, for so did everybody in those days in Israel, but there was in him the making of a real king, if he should prove faithful to his task, obedient to the divine leading, and loyal to his own highest ideals and ambitions. Such was the man who one day set out from his

father's house to seek, with the aid of one servant, the asses which had strayed or were lost. The fruitless search brought the two of them at last to the home of Samuel, because it was popularly supposed that Samuel had such extraordinary gifts as to be able at once to tell them where were the lost asses. And as they went up toward the city there was Samuel coming out to meet them. But they did not recognize him, and asked where the seer was, only to be astonished at the answer, "I am the seer," and to be invited to spend the night with him. On the morrow, as Saul and the servant set out for home, Samuel ordered the servant to be sent forward, and when they were alone, "Samuel took the vial of oil, and poured it upon his head, and kissed him, and said, Is it not that Jehovah hath anointed thee to be prince over his inheritance?" (1 Sam. 10. 1). So in simple dignity was Israel's first king anointed to his office. In his person there ended forever the office of judgeship, there began the office of kingship. That was an hour of fateful issues, for there seemed no probability that Israel could continue to go forward in a national life without a leader, and leadership among the other Oriental peoples was vested in kings. It must be so also in Israel, and here was the man to begin it.

On that day Samuel, who had been both judge and prophet, had divested himself of civil authority.

There were to be no more judges, for kingship would now make judgeship an empty memory. It remains to be seen whether Saul would prove equal to the new task. There need be no doubt that Samuel would continue equal to the spiritual tasks or duties of a prophet.

The Dignity of a Good Old Age. And now old age, venerable, beautiful, had come to Samuel. He could face his people and say, "I am old and gray-headed; and, behold, my sons are with you; and I have walked before you from my youth unto this day" (1 Sam. 12. 2). There's a fine example of the true dignity of age, and all men respect it secretly in their hearts and openly with ther lips. But the dignity of age grows out of the earlier life, and the character of the earlier life determines the honor of old age. Samuel knew this well enough, and appeals at once, and with full confidence, to their judgment: "Here I am: witness against me before Jehovah, and before his anointed: whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed? or whose hand have I taken a ransom to blind mine eyes therewith? and I will restore it unto you" (1 Sam. 12. 3). And to that manly demand there came an instant response which absolved him completely. There was not one of them who had any charge to lay against him. What a splendid record of a man's

life! What a noble inheritance of the years! What a comfort in the time of the dimmed eye and the faltering step! Look at the grand old man! Look back through hundreds of years, and revere him. There is no greater dignity than the dignity of goodness. The crown of old age is the memory of a good life, for "wisdom is the gray hair unto men, and an unspotted life is old age."

Suggestions for Study

1. The Bible. Read 1 Samuel, chapters 1-15.
2. The Commentaries. The First Book of Samuel by A. F. Kirkpatrick (*Cambridge Bible for Schools*). Samuel by A. R. S. Kennedy (The New Century Bible).
3. The Histories. Sanders, Wade, Peritz.

CHAPTER IV

DAVID, THE HEROIC KING

When our eyes were turned backward through the far distant years to look upon the great figure of Moses we were thinking about the element of greatness in human life, and there began to be a strong feeling within us that greatness is not only uncommon but extremely rare among men. It is common enough to hear men spoken of as great who are merely useful or conspicuous or even notorious, but time quickly dispels the illusion and the next, or at any rate a later generation discovers that the supposedly great man was but common clay. After the days of Moses there is a far cry till another great man appears. Men came and went and did their work, and, for our own comfort be it said, were useful, for they had a share in carrying forward human progress, and in so moving toward the coming in of the far distant kingdom of God. But great they were not, however much men might applaud their appearance and salute them as great. Above the ruck of the common herd there are indeed not a few figures of dignity and worth, and among them Gideon, a coward at first—a fighting deliverer

in the end; and Samuel the king maker, man of probity and honor and just fame; and Saul, the first king of Israel and a person of no mean achievement. But a man of towering greatness "like unto Moses," there had not been. But the time for his appearance is now here, and such a man rises in the person of David. There is no need for antiquity to set a fanfare of trumpets before him to attract our attention. Let no man trouble to light a bonfire to focus attention upon his kingly figure. As our eyes sweep over the assembled masses of people who move before the eye of imagination we shall have no trouble in picking him out from among their lines of mediocrity. He is not so tall as was Saul, but we shall see him and know him, and all those who stand with us looking at the historic procession of Israel's men will raise a simultaneous shout, "There he is."

Finding a Boy. Pearls and diamonds, emeralds and rubies have to be sought and found, they are not lying about as are pebbles. Great men were once boys and must be searched and found. David was once a boy, and the discovery of him was a duty providentially laid upon Samuel and by him gloriously fulfilled. It is a pitiful thing that greatness may be undiscovered, that great men have been born, lived and died, nor ever had chance to display their greatness. There are indeed types of greatness

which force and compel attention, that behold a place of effort and of usefulness and press into it. But it is not always so, nor even commonly so, but rather must the early signs of greatness be observed and the call extended. It was so in David's case. He must be discovered, and it is Samuel's crown of honor that it was he who did it. He found the boy, and gave him his chance, and second only in honor to the great man is the man who discovers the great man, who is yet untried and unheralded, and sets him on the way to greatness. In all the wonders of large business enterprises in this present world there is naught more wonderful than the presence of executives who observe a boy, a youth, young man, and piercing through his exterior appearance or his still modest achievement lift him to the plane in which usefulness becomes distinguished. Is there a boy of great possibilities whom you ought to seek out? Somebody ought to discover him. It would be worth the doing, though one needs to be careful, lest he be mistaken. The gosling will never be a swan.

The Search. Samuel was sent to Bethlehem to find a new king for Israel when Saul's failure had made a successor necessary. At Bethlehem he made preparations for a solemn religious ceremony, to which he invited a citizen of the dear and wholesome little city whose name was Jesse, together

with his sons, one of whom, according to divine suggestion, was to be chosen the future king. They came with their father, all of them—all but one. Nobody had thought it worth while to call him in; for he was only a boy and was out on the hillside keeping the sheep. It was not worth while to bother about him at all. God would certainly not need him at the sacrifice or miss him from it! That is the way many people think of boys still. "Oh, never mind; he's only a boy; he would not understand anyway." He wouldn't understand the music at the concert, he would not value the lecture or the sermon. Let him stay at home and do the chores! That is such colossal stupidity and selfishness that it is really hard to bear it now, or to think of it in the past, or refer to it patiently. There are selfish fathers who sit flapping lazy slippers on good-for-nothing old feet, while they grind into the dust the souls of their sons with chores, everlasting chores. The music of their unmelodious voices resounds with "Do this," "Do that," and with constant complaints that something was neglected, something ill done. What stupid folly. Chores are not life. David was doing the chores. He was herding the sheep. He was not at home. It did not matter.

Then Jesse's sons passed before Samuel to see which one should be chosen. The first to pass before him was Eliab. Taking a good look at him, Samuel

said to himself, "Surely Jehovah's anointed is before him" (1 Sam. 16. 6). But God had not chosen him, and Samuel was warned that "*Jehovah seeth* not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but Jehovah looketh on the heart" (Verse 7). Acting on this solemn counsel Samuel saw the other sons of Jesse who were present, and rejected them all.

The Boy Comes Home. Then they sent for the boy because there was nothing else to do. The impression he made is told quite simply in the words, "Now he was ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look upon." He was "ruddy," there need be no doubt that this means he had red hair. As Browning puts it:

> "God's child with his dew
> On thy gracious gold hair—"

that is, red gold—good old auburn, saluted by Holmes in the merry line,

> "Ye auburn locks, ye golden curls."

David was a beautiful lad, but he was not chosen for this reason, but rather because God discerned in him the qualities that should save Israel and the possibilities of a glorious career, and God meant to give him his chance.

Preparing for the Unknown. David had been a

shepherd boy on the hills about Bethlehem and thence had wandered widely over his native land, leading his sheep to pasture and to water. He had no books, papers, or magazines to divert his mind, or put it to sleep while he followed his humble calling. He had to watch the sheep, keep them from straying, and defend them against wild men who might steal a lamb, or wild beasts that might snatch sheep or lamb and make off into the thicket. The shepherd's work was varied, and the long hours were often filled with danger. The faithful shepherd had his hands full; and society, as well as his employer, was much in his debt, but seldom paid him well. But there was another reward, for it was work which gave a man no small opportunity for self-improvement, and many shepherds graduated from the service into posts of honor and dignity. This was possible if two factors met in unity, the first natural ability, the second diligence, to profit by the opportunities. The sequel shows plainly enough that David had inherited ability, but it shows equally well that he had profited greatly by his wise use of opportunity.

Three Great Gains. There were no less than three great gains open to David, all of which he made his own and used in after life. The first of these was knowledge of his native land. The shepherd wandered far, and if he were alert and ob-

servant might readily acquire a knowledge of the country which might prove useful in some future calling. Let us not forget that Moses was a shepherd for a whole generation and so learned the whole region about Sinai and acquired geographical knowledge of immense value to him and to his people when they had come out of Egypt. So it was with David. He kept his eyes open and learned his own land, and that knowledge was of immense importance when he became a leader of fighting men and, afterward, a king. The second gain was a skill in fighting and a certain joy in it. We talk sometimes of fighting blood, and there is such which penetrates and permeates whole families. There are American families that have had a representative in every war in which our flag has been carried. There is also such an endowment as fighting skill, born of use and practice. David learned it and earned it at his daily task. When he flung a stone at Goliath's head and found the mark at which he aimed it left a skilled and practised hand. As a shepherd he had learned to defend his sheep against thieves; and if he saw approaching a man of suspicious manner, it was a good defense to send a stone rolling threateningly toward his feet. Against wild animals also this was his best weapon. If he wandered down near the thickets of the Jordan valley he would need to watch some thorn-bush

moving menacingly and be quick to launch a stone at the spot. If he struck a lion in the face, there would be no further danger, for the small, maneless Asiatic lion will not go on to face another missile. But if no swift stone were hurled it might be the shepherd's duty to face the lion and, if possible, frighten him off, or lay him low with a knife thrust. That would demand a sure eye, a steady nerve and a stout heart. So had David learned to fight man or beast, and of his skill and courage he would give full proof when he fought Goliath singlehanded, and later when he led his men in sharp encounters with Israel's foes. The principles of fighting are extremely simple as Foch has lately been expounding them; and a man who knows how to fight human thieves and preying wild beasts will know how to fight the enemy troops if need arise. The third of the great gains which came to David in his youth was a knowledge of God, born of experience rooted in solitary prayer and meditation. The man who is alone with sheep may hear the voice of God, when the voice of man is far removed. David had the foundation on which to build in the knowledge of God's dealings with his people, for this would be taught him in his youth. It would not be wholly his own until he had turned it over again and again in mind and heart while lonely glens or wind-swept hills were about him. He learned to know God by

being alone with him, and so have all the saints in all ages in the same way. With this personally attained and experienced knowledge of God David was ready for his task. He had been divinely chosen, and up to the measure of the ability and knowledge of his day he knew the God who had chosen him. He was not chosen for the qualities which had commended Saul. It was now an internal, not an external basis. It was not physical, but moral qualities; not body, but soul; not bigness of body, but largeness of soul; not power, but courage; not impetuosity, but stability; not quickness, but sureness; not man-likeness, but God-likeness. There had been none like him before.

The Years of Testing. When Samuel anointed David he set him apart not to a life of ease, but of turmoil, trial, tumult. There were to be sore testings before the appearance of any triumphs. We do not know very perfectly the order of events in David's life either before or after the anointing, and must content ourselves with enough knowledge of the main and illuminative facts to gain an impression of the man. David was at Saul's court. He played music for that distraught man. He met the leaders of the people, and learned the quality of the people over whom he was to reign, while he gained in military experience. Forced at last by Saul's jealousy, he had fled the court, and was for a time

among the Philistines, Israel's enemies, carefully avoiding any direct injury to his own people (1 Sam. 27. 8-12), though pleasing his hosts as best he might. When Saul was dead and David had poured out his lament, the way was open to begin efforts toward making a kingdom under his own scepter. It was a task of immense difficulty. He made Hebron, which lies about twenty miles south-southwest of Jerusalem, his capital. It was a good, though not a commanding site for the central city of the kingdom, but it was a tiny little kingdom, about fifty-five miles long from north to south, and having a breadth of only twenty-five or thirty miles —about the extent of a fair sized American county. It was really only the southern part of the territory of the Hebrew people. The northern part was quite ready and willing to accept as king the son of Saul, whose name was really Eshbaal, but was mockingly called Ish-bosheth by the sacred writer who abhorred the word Baal. He was a man of no mean capacity, and Abner, who represented him in the field, was a man of ability. The territory which they grasped and attempted to hold was much larger than David's possession. They were soon ready to try conclusions in the field with David. There can be no doubt that David's throne was in danger. It was a providential outcome for the world that David and his captain Joab won the

contest, and David was set in the way which should make him king over north and south alike.

The New Capital. When David had reunited Israel it became plain that Hebron could no longer be the capital city; it lay too far south; it was difficult to defend against raids from wandering nomads, nor would the northern tribes be likely to yield ready and steady allegiance to a king whose throne was established so far from their broad fields and little cities. David must choose a new capital, and the choice would be difficult, for tribal jealousies might easily be excited by any choice, however well suited it might otherwise seem to be. We shall understand this if we remember what struggles have taken place over the choice of a capital for some of the American States. Even little Rhode Island has felt compelled to have two capitals, Providence and Newport, and not until 1900 was the latter entirely deprived of its honors. If there was such a struggle here how much greater might it have been for David. His decision was a stroke of genius, a flash of inspiration. He chose Jerusalem, which occupied a neutral site belonging neither to the northern tribes nor to Judah. It had great natural strength, and a fair, though not abundant water supply; it lay upon a trunk road, and had a good but easily defended pass through the hills toward the west. The city was already centuries old when

David took it, but its real glory began with him. Take it all in all it is the holiest spot on this fair earth. Small wonder that the psalmist burst out in the joyous acclaim:

"If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning"

(Psa. 137. 5), and we must never forget that the blest city of David was later to become the very symbol and expression for "Jerusalem the Golden," the final home of God's saints. David undoubtedly builded better than he knew, but the glory of the deed and the splendor of its outcome are his, and none shall ever take them away.

The Ark and its Abode. The city which David had thus chosen he made not merely the center and visible expression of the little kingdom's might, he made it also the abiding place of the symbols of faith, for thither he brought the Ark. This was in itself nothing but a little movable wooden box which enshrined the memorials of the past history of God's dealings with them. It had never had any real abiding place, but was carried about on their journeyings, was even borne into battle, and had fallen into the hands of their foes. David gave it a place for its final abode, and there it was to remain so long as it had existence. His motive was primarily religious. This was the symbol of God's

relation to the Hebrew people and of their relation to him. Whatever power or influence the people of Israel was ever to have would be due to this relationship. The glory of Israel was not art or literature or law or science; it was religion, and religion meant God and man brought into relations of mutual fatherhood and sonship. Again David had built better than he knew, for it was not given to his eyes to behold the progress of religious thought from that choice until this day when more and more perfectly, however slowly to our eyes, the knowledge of God spreads in the hearts and lives of men. David's capital city was destined to be the capital city of the greatest of all religions, and there would never be another Jerusalem to vie with it until the new Jerusalem should come down out of heaven, adorned as a bride for her husband. David indeed intended to adorn his capital with a temple, fitly to enshrine the venerable and venerated Ark of the Covenant, but this desire was frustrated. Perhaps he had honors enough.

The Enduring Kingdom. The seventh chapter of the second book of Samuel is one of the greatest in the earlier books of Scripture. Its significance lies in the fact that it portrays the greatness of David's kingdom, and its deeply religious basis, but it goes far beyond that. The point of the chapter is not that David or his son Solomon (2 Sam. 7. 13) shall

build a house for Jehovah, but that Jehovah shall build a house for David. Verse 13 interrupts the flow of thought, and is either parenthetical or an insertion from some other passage. It is true indeed that Solomon did build a temple and so fulfilled the promise of the verse, but the glory of Nathan's prophecy is that it declares that, "Thy house and thy kingdom shall be made sure forever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever" (2 Sam. 7. 16). All David's descendants are so to be treated by God that the future of the house shall be secure to this great issue. This is, of course, the prediction of a great Messianic kingdom, and David responds: "Thou hast spoken also of thy servant's house for a great while to come" (2 Sam. 7. 19). Later days looked back upon this great prophecy, and saw that its forward reach was indeed far in the future, and the Messiah is called "*David*" by Hosea, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, so that David, when these passages were set down, seemed great enough to be an earthly king, typical of the heavenly king who should rule over a heavenly kingdom in the hearts of men.

Likewise also a Soldier. From the peaceful aspirations of religion David turned with equal or greater ease to the pursuit of war. We have seen how small was the kingdom when he began to reign. When death closed his eyes he left a kingdom about

two hundred miles long and from seventy to a hundred miles wide, which made it a little larger than the State of Vermont. That may seem small to our eyes accustomed to sweep over territories so vast as now belong to the great nations, but judged by the standards of his day it ranked high among the nations, and its power was widely acknowledged. It was built by the sword, as were all the kingdoms that surrounded it, or were near it in western Asia. David had subdued the Philistines, who long had trodden Israel under foot, and before his dash and fire had fallen Moab, Ammon, the Aramæans, and the Edomites. The promise of his youthful valor was fulfilled in the years of full manhood, and never was his prowess to be forgotten. His was a strong arm, and well did he deserve remembrance when men enjoyed the peace which war had won.

And an Administrator. Scarcely less successful was David in the administering of his little kingdom than in its acquisition, and this may safely be regarded as ability of a higher order. The whole kingdom was organized so that the people were locally ruled by their elders, or by a man to whom eldership came from social standing or useful public service. But above all these there was possible a final and direct appeal to the king's own person (2 Sam. 14. 4). At his side, in the state administration were three men—the scribe, who was an offi-

cial roughly corresponding to what we should call Secretary of State; and secondly, a recorder or keeper of the archives, and the "*king's friend*," a sort of personal or private counselor; and to these there was later added a master of the levies. To these also were added the two priests of highest rank, Zadok and Abiathar.

Musician and Poet. In his earliest days David was celebrated as a musician, in his later days as a poet. There are preserved as his composition a lament over Saul and Jonathan (2 Sam. 1. 17-27) and a splendid song of triumph (2 Sam. 22), and these together would make a poetical reputation anywhere in our day. The second of these appears also in the Psalter (Psa. 18), and many other of the Psalms are ascribed to him. That some of them really do go back to him may well be accepted, but all the Psalms have been repeatedly edited for public use, and it is no longer possible to demonstrate David's authorship. The superscriptions which contain his name were added long after his time, and represent only the guesses of a later day. The Psalms are timeless; they fit all ages and all conditions and their value to us is in no way connected with questions of their authorship.

The Dark Side. Across the great line of light and honor and joy and achievement which make up most of David's life there runs a dark line of

sin and sorrow. The whole sad story is told (2 Sam. 11-20) with deep pathos, ethical passion and amazing frankness in the record that has come down to us. There revealed in all their awful depravity are the sins of the man and of his age, and there are all the consequences as a warning to all generations yet to come. It is too sad. Let us not dwell upon it, but remember that bad as it is, it is not representative of the whole of David's life. He had indeed grievous faults; his great career is smirched with debasing sins, and with fearful cruelty, but the main drift of it was upward, not downward, and the good had dominion over the evil.

An Engaging Figure. There is no particular danger of being accused of exaggeration in saying that David is the most engaging figure in the Old Testament. He is also the greatest figure in respect of many-sidedness. Others excel him in one quality or another, or in some special achievement, none equals him in this one characteristic. Most men do one thing well and no more. Most famous men represent one particular type of greatness. David differs from most of them in that he represents nearly every side of his country's development, greatness and glory. He is a shepherd boy, so he represents the humble people who toil all their lives at hard or very low labor. He is a musician, so he represents those who can play on an instru-

ment like Jubal or sing songs of triumph like Miriam or Deborah. He is a good, clean, stiff fighter and can conquer his country's enemies like Joshua or Gideon. He is a king, and men looked back on the days of his kingship and sighed for their return—no matter how glorious later days might be. "The truth is, in the estimation of Israel this man is a personification of the nation itself—the embodiment of her qualities, the incarnation of her spirit, the type of her destiny."

Suggestions for Study

1. The Bible. 1 Samuel, chap. 15 to 2 Samuel, chap. 20. Be sure to read, in any case, 2 Samuel 9-20.

2. The Commentaries. The Books of Samuel by Kirkpatrick and by Kennedy.

3. The Histories. Sanders, Wade, Peritz.

CHAPTER V

ELIJAH, THE MILITANT PROPHET

After David, Solomon, after the great king who laid the foundations came the king whose policies wrecked the unity of the kingdom, dissipated its growing wealth, destroyed the personal loyalties whose beginnings were so promising, and turned back the hands of the clock. David has justly found place and completely filled the last chapter, but there is no chapter for Solomon, for though he was Solomon the magnificent, he is surely not Solomon the great, nor does he justly find place in a list of great characters. We must spring lightly over his name, his deeds and his age, looking down upon the wreck which his extravagance, arrogance and autocracy produced to contemplate the figures of those who rebuilt the fabric and set it on its way again. We shall remind ourselves that at the close of Solomon's reign the kingdom of Israel broke into two unequal pieces, the lesser kingdom of Judah in the south, and the larger kingdom of Israel in the north. The latter supplied greater men in fields of activity, but the former maintained a much

more consistent religious development. In what yet remains of our little journey together in this book we shall have glimpses of great characters from both, but the southern kingdom, which endured the longer, must necessarily occupy most of our attention. To-day it is the northern kingdom which stretches out before our eyes, and the man who stands before us, in the full glare of an Oriental sun, is Elijah, the militant prophet. We shall not understand him until we have looked backward over a series of events which gave him his call and his opportunity. It is a sorry story in many ways, but there are not wanting flashes of genius, nor is it difficult to discern the workings of providence in the darkest hours.

An Interval. When Solomon was dead his son Rehoboam ruled in his stead from about 933 to 916 B. C. in the southern kingdom. He was, as far as inheritance could have weight, the lawful king of a united Israel. He might have ruled over the whole people if he had not demonstrated a criminal capacity for stupid folly. Solomon had impoverished his people by grandiose schemes of building for his own luxurious living and for the adornment of his capital city Jerusalem. Had he built the Temple magnificently and then been content to house himself modestly the people would have had enough means left to continue a decent life and to

upbuild a moderate surplus for future expansion in the arts of life for the extension of a valuable commerce. When Solomon lay dead and his son claimed the throne the people were in no mood to have his policies continued and made application to his son to learn what he would do. At a public assembly held at Shechem the greater part of the tribes seized the occasion to demand of Rehoboam an explicit statement of his policy. He had just sense enough to ask advice before he gave answer. He took three days to consider, and in them asked counsel of two groups, the old men and the young. The former advised soft words, the latter said to him, "*Thus shalt thou say unto this people that spake unto thee, saying, Thy father made our yoke heavy, but make thou it lighter unto us; thus shalt thou speak unto them, My little finger is thicker than my father's loins. And now whereas my father did lade you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke: my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions*" (1 Kings 12. 10, 11). In the madness and folly of his heart he accepted the advice of these hotheads and "answered the people roughly." Oh, the madness and folly of it! If he had so much as a spark of wisdom, prudence or sagacity he would have known that the hour was not propitious for such an answer. It was a time for conciliation, for the "soft answer that turneth away

wrath," for an expressed willingness to serve his people for their best interests, and so to serve his own. He had sense enough to ask advice, but was too big a fool to choose the better from the worse. When the people heard his reply their answer came at once, "What portion have we in David?"—which meant we have nothing to do with David's family any more. Then they uttered the wild cry, "To your tents, O Israel!" which meant "Let us break up this assembly and send everybody home to attend to his own work." So was the kingdom rent in twain. It had cost about eighty years of planning, fighting and diplomacy by Samuel, Saul and David to build up a national unity, and in three days this precious fool had torn it in tatters, never to be a union again. To Rehoboam there was left the tribe of Judah, into which was absorbed Simeon, with perhaps Benjamin. All the other tribes, far more numerous and more strong, went off to set up a separate kingdom, the kingdom of Israel, sometimes called the Kingdom of the Ten Tribes, choosing as their king Jeroboam, the first of that name to rule among them.

Jeroboam and Others. Jeroboam was a man of courage and industry. He set himself to build up his kingdom with tremendous energy. This was well indeed, but he adopted one line of policy destined to bring deep and imperishable consequences

of evil upon his people. In the partition of the kingdom of Solomon the city of Jerusalem fell to Rehoboam, and there was the Temple, the very center of the religious life of the nation. Jeroboam thought this might withdraw from him and from his kingdom the thoughts of his people who were religiously minded, and determined to prevent this by a bold and perilous stroke. He set up rival religious shrines, two of them at Bethel and at Dan, and in them placed as symbols of the Divine two images of bulls. He intended these to represent Jehovah, but it was a distinct violation of the command of the Decalogue, and was certain to mislead many, and to make easier the path backward into an unspiritual and even idolatrous worship. His name wes execrated in later days and the prophets Amos, Hosea, Isaiah and Micah carried on a ceaseless warfare against the whole system thus represented. The sacred bulls were scornfully called "golden calves," and the people warned against them. He had broken the second commandment under pretense of keeping the first, and we shall soon see the effect.

The successors of Jeroboam were Nadab, Baasha, Elah and Zimri, all of whom ruled short periods, the longest Baasha, about twenty-three years, the shortest Zimri, only a week. They were weak kings, all of them, and their names are writ in water.

When Elah was king there was war between the Philistines and Israel, and while his men suffered and died in the field he was "*drinking himself drunk*" in his capital city Tirzah. Such a man was not likely to last long, and after his assassination the army made Omri king (887-876 B. C.), who was a man as great as Jeroboam and destined to retrieve, in large measure, the falling fortunes of his kingdom. He displayed military capacity in conquering Moab, and in holding part of it, and civil wisdom in the choice of a new capital of the city of Samaria. He called it Shomeron, which means watch tower, like the German Wartburg, forever associated with the glorious name of Luther. It commands a splendid prospect, for from it you may see the waters of the Mediterranean gleaming in the sunlight twenty-three miles away. It was admirably suited to an easy defense against enemies, and that the kingdom lasted for a century and a half is due, in large measure, "to its almost impregnable capital which resisted even the Assyrians for three years." The reign of Omri is to be reckoned as among the greatest in the history of the Hebrew people. When he was dead he left his people the great legacy of a son as great as himself, and not all kings are able to do that.

Ahab and Jezebel. If we were in pursuit of other game than the study of a mighty personality among

the prophets we should surely look at Ahab in his conflicts with the Moabites and with the Assyrians. We should fasten our eyes on two big and most interesting inscriptions left by these peoples in which Ahab's name appears, and if to knowledge we could add imagination we should see what a towering historic figure is Ahab. But it is not Ahab the man, but Ahab the husband that calls for our thought just now. He married Jezebel, daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians, that is, the Phœnicians. To satisfy her desire of worshiping the Baal of her own people Ahab actually built a temple for her god in Samaria and there erected an altar for his worship (1 Kings 16. 32). He would very likely never have done this had he not the example of Jeroboam and the sacred bulls at Bethel and Dan. Those two bulls had broken the slender cord of spiritual worship, and while they were nominally intended to represent Jehovah they actually led to a loose conception of his character, and made it easy to think that it might be permissible to think of other gods in terms of permission, if not of reverence and devotion. Every individual in Israel was responsible to his Creator for his own personal recognition of his exclusive right to worship. But religion is a social as well as an individual relationship, and as the king was the living representative of society, and its pinnacle, he bore a personal respon-

sibility to maintain inviolate the social recognition of Israel's only God, Jehovah. Ahab had not done this. Whatever his own attitude may have been Ahab had certainly aided, consented and assisted in the setting up of the worship of the Baal of the Phœnicians whose name was probably Melkarth. It was simply inevitable that the women of the court should follow the queen's example. It was highly probable that other folk who heard of these deeds, and saw with their own eyes the evidence of royal support for Phœnician worship, should imitate what the court approved. Society was speedily being permeated with Baalism in some form. The fruits of Jeroboam's setting up of the symbols in Bethel and Dan were appearing. He it was who had planted and others watered. Omri had made his contribution and Ahab had seen the blossom and now the fruit was to be gathered, and a poisoned fruit it was.

The Need. The religion of Israel, derived from Moses and Sinai, set forward by good men and true, was in grave danger, in imminent peril. It is always easier to go down than to go upward. The ascent from lower forms of religion to higher, from material or physical to spiritual ideas of God is long and toilsome. Whatever point had been reached by Israel would be quickly and easily lost. Unless some supremely potent and gifted servant of God

should arise and in clarion and unmistakable tones summon his people out of the growing toils of Baal worship the whole nation would be engulfed and perhaps even the kingdom of Judah might be swept into the torrent, and Solomon's temple be neglected while David's holy city saw rising within its walls a similar temple to some of the Baals. The hour of need had indeed struck, but the man was at hand.

The Three Periods. In the history of human redemption from ignorance and sin there are three great outstanding periods. The first is the period of the choice of Israel as the divinely appointed agent, and the central human figure of that period is Moses. The second is the period in which the whole question of the existence of a revealed religion was at stake in a conflict with a desperate and debasing nature religion, and the central human figure of that period was Elijah. The third is the period in which the Incarnation, the Death for the atonement, and the Resurrection took place, and the central figure, both human and divine, in that period is the figure of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We have seen Moses, and we now see Elijah as he makes his great fight for the religion of Jehovah.

The First Sight of a Great Man. The first time that we see Elijah the scene is dramatic. Indeed, we see him usually in dramatic situations, but there are none more thrilling than the first. It was at

Samaria or near it. There stands Ahab—and his was no mean figure—a man if ever there was one in Israel's history. We know him well enough as the man who dared to join a coalition of eleven or twelve rulers in Western Asia to resist the Assyrians, who were already threatening to sweep all the way to the Mediterranean. On this day he appears before us, and thrown about his shoulders, likely enough, was one of those rich red robes which the Phœnicians alone knew how to dye, robes the pride and the coveted possession of kings everywhere. Facing him stands the burly figure of a man who is not awed by the king's presence, his unshorn locks hung in black waves upon his powerful shoulders. He had a rough mantel of camel hide with the hair on it (2 Kings 1. 8). He could run like a deer and keep it up for seventeen or eighteen miles in front of a chariot (1 Kings 18. 46). He had physical basis for courage and there was no fear in him, though there must have been few men in Israel who would not have felt a shiver of apprehension as they faced Ahab. Elijah looks into those dark and dreadful eyes and utters these menacing words, "As Jehovah, the God of Israel, liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word." Look at that for a declaration. It begins with the thunderous name Jehovah; there is no mention of the

Baal of Sidon. "The threat raises in the most effective way the religious question which Elijah wished to force on the minds of his contemporaries: Who is the truly Divine being—Jehovah or Baal? In nothing did the ancient world recognize the hand of God more directly than in the giving and withholding of rain; and the chief purpose of this prediction is to demonstrate that the God whose servant Elijah is is the sole ruler of nature, against whose will no power in heaven or earth can prevail." Ahab must have been stunned by the boldness of the man, by the awesome weight of his threat. It was spoken and then Elijah disappeared.

Who was Elijah? When we first see him before Ahab he is called Elijah the Tishbite. His name is significant, for it means "Jehovah is God." There is a challenge in the name. It brooks no dispute. He will not argue the question whether "Baal is God" as Jezebel would say; "no," "no," a thousand times "no;" "Jehovah is God" and there's an end on 't! Was Elijah a monotheist? Men still dispute over that question. I should say that he was certainly a practical monotheist, if he were not a theoretical monotheist. He was a monotheist in act when he sneered and scoffed at Baal on Mount Carmel. I do not know whether he could have sat down on a rock by the brook Cherith, and answered clearly every question that I might put to him to see whether

he could defend monotheism as a philosophical idea, but if I had tried it he would probably have sent me up the rocky slopes followed by a shower of stones! He was at any rate so fully on Jehovah's side that Amos and Hosea found a people transformed by his preaching to such an extent that they could preach in Jehovah's name as the only God. Elijah the Tishbite. He is not called Elijah the prophet when he first appears. He is simply Elijah the Tishbite, which means that he came from Tishbe of Gilead, born and reared among the rocky hills and dales beyond Jordan. He knew God's poor, for he was of them. He had the rugged virtues of the simple people. He had tramped afoot from his mountain home full forty miles to Samaria, fording the swift Jordan on his way. He had come to threaten the king, he had come to save Israel's faith and to give it a new impulse onward and upward. The hour needed a great prophet for the work. He was fit to do it and do it he would.

The Second Appearance. The first appearance of Elijah was before the king; the next time we see him he is in lonely seclusion by the Brook Cherith, perhaps thirty-five miles from Samaria, eating the rough food which ravens found and drinking cool water from the little brook that was daily flowing less free as the drought increased and no rain fell upon the mountains. The man who did not

fear the king is now alone with the King of kings, and waits to see whether the terror which lack of water was sure to bring might change the king's mind.

Zarephath and Carmel. When the waters of the slow flowing brook were failing Elijah tramped away over the hills to the tiny village of Zarephath, whence he could see the blue Mediterranean. There he saw a widow who was on the verge of starvation with an only son, and the very last bits of humble provision alone remained. It seems a harsh command that Elijah laid upon her to cook the last remnants and give them to him, trusting only that his word might be fulfilled and food be provided for her and her charge. So did it fall out, but one wonders at the prophet's boldness, and gives a shiver to think of how severe he seems in his dealing with a poor widow. But before we can collect our wits the prophet is gone, and fifty miles away we see him on Mount Carmel with four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal before him, and he alone. The story of that great contest is one of the most vivid narratives in all the Scriptures (1 Kings 18. 20-40), and to repeat it, or try to repeat it, were stupid folly—read it, read it just as it stands in the Book. How brilliant, even thrilling is the picture it presents! Elijah scoffing at the god Baal, and sneering at the poor deluded priests and then ordering them all slain!

It is a horrible tragedy, enacted long ago, and strange in our eyes, who have been taught to tolerate all faiths and every form of no faith. But the times were different then, and Elijah was living in that age, not in this. After a victory so overwhelming surely Elijah will give himself to rejoicing and to triumph, yet that is precisely what did not happen.

Under the Juniper. Elijah indulged in no triumph, but fled, going one hundred and twenty-five miles from Carmel to Beersheba, and there cast himself down under a juniper or broom bush and gave himself to despair. We must try to enter sympathetically into the fearful discouragement which weighed the mighty and militant soul to earth. Foolish expositors have sometimes scoffed at Elijah's despair. That is a poor display of incapacity to understand a great soul in distress. Let those who have suffered most enter into his agony. He had indeed had a spectacular triumph, but he knew well enough that the effects would be but temporary. The struggle to save Israel's faith was beginning, not closing. He would need divine power to face the future. He would in himself rather die than live to meet it. But he lay down and slept, and God gave him the restoring power of food. But there are higher needs and he must seek and find their satisfaction.

Horeb. Far away amid the lonely and austere

mountains where Moses had received from God the very beginnings of the doctrine of the Divine, in the region sometimes called Horeb and sometimes Sinai, by different writers whose works are preserved in the Pentateuch, there Elijah hides in a cave, to await what God shall say to him. He would know God and his will, and the place to secure such knowledge was surely there where God had made himself known to Moses. In that holy region Elijah waited the divine revelation, and there learned to know God in the *"still small voice,"* or, as the Hebrew words really mean, in a "sound of thin silence." It was strange that this man who had lived and done his work in such tumults of noise as at Carmel should be able to recognize God as manifested in quiet and stillness, but so he did. The whole story of the new revelation (1 Kings 19. 9-12) is beautiful and full of interest. From it Elijah went away changed, ready to give less heed to storm and more to the power of the word spoken to the ears and to the hearts of men. More than ever before he was to be a prophet—a speaker for God. God has made himself known to a broken-hearted and dispirited man, and as soon as Elijah has caught the message, has apprehended the Presence which he could not see, then God bids him—bids him to what? God bids him to sit down at his ease and enjoy the divine Presence; is that it?

O no, far from it. God bids him go back to his task. So it is always; with Moses, with Paul, with the Lord himself after the temptation. God makes himself known not for the selfish delight of the recipient of the revelation. Nay, rather that a man may lay down his sin, or his weakness, or his unfaith, or his despondency and go out to work as a prophet or a reformer. Elijah went back to mingle in the political movements of the day, and to choose a man, quite unlike himself, to be his successor. The vision of God had made a greater Elijah.

A Great Prophet. There can be no doubt that Elijah was "the greatest religious personality that had been raised up in Israel since Moses." Wellhausen has nobly expressed Elijah's great idea in the splendid definition, "To him Baal and Jehovah represented, so to speak, a contrast of principles, of profound and ultimate practical convictions; both could not be right, nor could they exist side by side. For him there existed no plurality of Divine Powers, operating with equal authority in different spheres, but everywhere One Holy and Mighty being, who revealed himself, not in the life of nature, but in those laws by which alone human society is held together, in the ethical demands of the spirit." That man became the precursor of the long line of spiritual prophets who are one of the chief glories of Israel's religion, and it was their destiny to look

forward and finally to have their line culminate in the incomparable figure of the Saviour.

Suggestions for Study

1. The Bible. 1 Kings, chapters 17-27; Mal. 4. 5; Matt. 11. 10ff; Matt. 17. 3; Mark 9. 4; Luke 9. 36.

2. The Commentaries. The Books of Kings, by W. E. Barnes (*Cambridge Bible for Schools*). Kings, by John Skinner (*The Century Bible*).

3. The Histories. Sanders, Wade, Peritz.

CHAPTER VI

AMOS, THE PROPHET OF JUSTICE

From Elijah to Amos there is a stretch of a hundred years, and a hundred years is not much in the history of mankind, or in the history of a religion, but in that short span of time there is a great religious development in Israel and a great change in a prophet's method. Elijah is quite largely a man of action, and Amos is a man of words; Elijah spoke to a king, and Amos to the people in the streets; Elijah, so far as we know, did not write down what he had said, but Amos did, and in the doing gave us a book which is the first of the written prophets. There are indeed other differences and interesting distinctions between the men, and some of them will surely leap to the reader's eye as he seeks now to see what manner of man was this who comes before us.

The Early Days. The name Amos means "burden bearer," and so he was. His early home was at Tekoa, a tiny village six miles southeast of Bethlehem and about twelve miles from Jerusalem. The

land about it is stony, and no real agriculture on any considerable scale has ever been possible or practiced there. Here and there the diligent might grow a few poor vegetables, but the life was chiefly pastoral, and flocks of sheep the main support of the simple folk. Amos grew from a shepherd boy into a shepherd, and hard is the shepherd's life every way, but in few places so hard as there. The flock of sheep would have to be led considerable distances to find pasture, and the shepherd might at times be weeks away from home alone with his sheep on hillsides hard and forbidding. Food would be rough and scanty, bread usually unleavened and baked in round cake fashion on a heated stone, with meat an uncommon luxury, cooked with a few lentils and onions. In seasons fit for their production there would be figs and olives, pistachio nuts and almonds, and pomegranates and dates, and there would be milk and cheese, but none of these in any abundance. Below Tekoa lay the Dead Sea, and a welter of sickening heat with torrential downpours of rain in the season both of early and latter rains. The shepherd must take the weather as it came and with no protection against any of its rigors. He slept with his sheep, and with one eye open to protect them with a heavy club when need arose. A thief might creep up to steal a sheep and carry it off for a feast with his fellows, and if the shepherd traveled

northward near the thickets of Jordan there were skulking lions eager to snatch a straggler from the flock.

The meager life wrung from shepherd's toil was supplemented by Amos through the exercise of another labor. There are two kinds of fig trees grown in the East, the one small which bears the well known and highly esteemed fig of commerce, the other large and commonly called the sycamore fig. This tree bears a very inferior fruit seldom eaten by man, and refused even by cattle unless in extremes of hunger. There is, however, a method by which it may be improved so as to be usable. As the fig nears maturity it may be punctured by a sharp instrument, and then discharges a few drops of acrid juice. The wound heals, the fig ripens and is then edible by cattle and may even serve to nourish the poor. Shepherd and puncturer of sycamore fruits, these were the labors of Amos; by these was his humble life sustained from childhood. If we could have seen Amos in those days we should probably have said, "There he is, a common drudge, and so he will remain." Yet in that common drudge there was the making of a great man when God and he were come into partnership.

The Years of Training. Amos was in training as he led his sheep or punctured the sycamore figs. He was not likely aware of this, but men who come

into greatness seldom know in the formative years just how the opportunities and the passing days are forming them. When Amos was with his fellows he must have talked much of serious things, and his talk was certainly good. This judgment is sure because his book is in extraordinarily good Hebrew. Hear what one of the greatest Hebrew scholars of our day, Robertson Smith, says of the little book's style: "The humble condition of a shepherd following his flock on the bare mountains of Tekoa has tempted many commentators from Jerome downward, to think of Amos as an unlettered clown, and to trace his 'rusticity' to the language of his book. To the unprejudiced judgment, however, the prophecy of Amos appears one of the best examples of pure Hebrew style. The language, the images, the grouping, are alike admirable; and the simplicity of the diction, obscured only in one or two passages by the fault of transcribers, is a token, not of rusticity, but of perfect mastery over a language which, though unfit for the expression of abstract ideas, is unsurpassed as a vehicle for impassioned speech." That is high praise from a modern master fully competent to pass a sober and sound judgment. If we ask how Amos acquired this great gift the answer can only be that its origins were in native ability and in practice. Men are born with a gift of speech, with a sense of words, with a feeling for

their use, and a power to use them, and if this birthright gift be used and practiced with a certain watchful care the man becomes eloquent of speech or skillful in writing. Amos must have had the birthright, he must have practised well the gift as he talked with men, weighing his words and speaking carefully as well as sincerely, earnestly, modestly or passionately as time or occasion demanded. He did not know as he talked with a few companions in the poor little village street of Tekoa that God would need him and use him, and that the day would come when his words would echo round the world. He was in training and, as Robertson Smith goes on to say, "the prophecies of Amos, though evidently rearranged for publication, and probably shortened from their original spoken form, are excellent writing, because the prophet writes as he spoke, preserving all the effects of pointed and dramatic delivery, with that breath of lyrical fervor which lends a special charm to the highest Hebrew oratory." It was, then, not in the schools, but in the village streets, in the little cottages of the shepherds, that Amos formed his style, learned the great and wonderful art of powerful and convincing speech. But the gift of speech would be vain if there were naught to say, and we must make inquiry about the prophet's training in the content of his message as well as in his speech.

God and the Prophet's Soul. The contact between God and the soul of a man is too mysterious for us, too deep for our understanding, and the mingling of human and divine in the prophetic messages too wonderful for our analysis. Amos was sure of a divine call, declaring positively in unmistakable words, "I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was a herdsman, and a dresser of sycamore trees: and Jehovah took me from following the flock, and Jehovah said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel" (Amos 7. 14, 15). Besides this call Amos was sure that the word which he was preaching came from God, declaring over and over again, "Thus saith Jehovah," and, "Thus the Lord Jehovah showed me." How the Divine Spirit operated we know not, we know only that the word declared by the prophet to that age continues in this age to declare God, and that this God is our God, the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that the message of Amos as divine is self-evidencing to those who will receive it. But whatever the divine method in inspiration, there can be no doubt that it left Amos a man, an agent of the Divine, but not a machine, not an instrument like a steel tool without the power of thought or the expression of individuality. Amos was Amos still, though God had touched him, and the message which he delivered was his own as well as God's, and that leads us to

inquire just a bit further concerning Amos's training for his duties.

Observation, Illustration. The truth of God that Amos declared was spoken in vivid and moving Hebrew speech, and it was filled with illustrations drawn from observation of everyday life. All who move men by speech are more or less gifted in the use of illustrations drawn from life or from literature. The greatest preachers know well the power and the need of illustration, and the greater their popular interest the surer are we to find that the skillful use of illustration is one of their outstanding characteristics. Charles Spurgeon, as I personally remember his preaching, was ever enlivening and ever enriching his preaching with illustrations drawn from the Bible or from the life of the streets of London, while Henry Parry Liddon, "beneath the great dome of St. Paul's, the center of the world's concourse," drew his illustrations from the world's literature, from Greece to England, over a period of more than two thousand years. Amos resembled Spurgeon rather than Liddon, and possessed a veritable genius for apt illustration drawn from the life of the field or the village. There is not a page of his immortal little book that does not glow with images of life turned with amazing skill and applied to moral or religious ends. Whence came these? They came, of course, from keen

observation during the years the man trudged the trails with his sheep behind him, or watched the worker in the fields or looked with interest on some village craftsman at his task. Amos could speak for God because he had got ready to do it, in the use of his native tongue, in the observation of life and in a close communion with God, meditation upon his works and a searching after his will.

The Background. Like all other of the prophets Amos lived in human history and found the need for his message in the lives of men, and preached to his own age. The last king of the Fifth Dynasty of Israel was Jeroboam II (783-743 B. C.), and his was a reign of magnificent achievement. Before him Israel had seen dark days indeed, and had lost from the patrimony a great stretch of territory, much of which was far more fertile and valuable than that which remained. It was in the days of Jehu the king (842-814 B. C.) that this tragedy occurred, and the cause of it was the war made upon Israel by the savage Hazael, king of Damascus, who seized "all the land of Gilead, the Gadites, and the Reubenites, and the Manassites, from Aroer, which is by the valley of Arnon, even Gilead and Bashan" (2 Kings 10. 33). Jeroboam II determined to restore to his own kingdom and people this lost territory, and he had the immense stimulus that the prophet Jonah had predicted his success (2 Kings

14. 25), and brilliant was the outcome of the king's campaigns. He won back the whole of the lost territory, and plundered both Damascus and Hamath, two rich cities, once under the rule or domination of Solomon, and lost when he was dead. No such military successes had been known since the early days, and Driver justly calls this "the culminating point in the history of the northern kingdom."

The Consequences. Many were the consequences, both good and ill, which resulted from these successful moves against the power of Damascus, and of them four are important for the study of the work of Amos. The first of these was the sudden accession of riches which resulted from plunder of the towns, villages and, especially, from the two big cities of Hamath and Damascus. It was the custom of the time for armies to loot (not all of them have been free of the tendency in modern times!), and we must imagine the ill-disciplined troops of Jeroboam moving homeward, every man laden with whatever he could secure, many driving asses burdened with heavy furniture or with woven stuffs of silk or wool. The soldiers would sell it to strangers or give it to their own folk, and fresh accessions would appear as the next band of veterans came home. By this many who had been poor were suddenly enriched, and a process began

which made a profound change in the national characteristics. Second to this came a more stable enrichment, for the whole agricultural production of the reconquered territory came over the Jordan into Israel instead of flowing northward into Damascus, and when it is remembered that Bashan, famous for big bulls, was a part of the restored lands we may imagine how great was produce in hay and grain and cattle. The third influence exerted by the great king's military successes was a sort of feeling and emotion, a sense of victory. The Hebrews had long known of oppression and the domination of other peoples; they were now conscious in a wonderful way of power. They felt themselves to be a victorious people, for they had conquered and humbled in the dust the once victorious Aramæans from Damascus, and he who now spoke to them would be expected to recognize them as a great people and not offend their new born national pride. The sense of victory is sweet to nations, and any sneer at a victorious people is perilous. Think how proud are Americans of their achievements in war; or of the glorious pride of Britain, whose far-flung battle line of defense encircles the globe. Reduce the great to the small and one may imagine the pride of little Israel. But there was a fourth and very important effect from these victories and from the results and that was

upon the national religion. Riches did not cause the forms of religion to cease, but rather shifted them into greater magnificence, but with this there came less emphasis on the ethical side of the religious life, less willingness to curb desire, restrain passion, watch evil and avoid it, and more reliance upon the priestly office to obtain forgiveness through sacrifices and offerings. It is easier for most of us to be devoutly religious than to be rigorously good and true, righteous in word and deed, clean in motive and ever ready to do well and live uprightly.

The Difficulties. To face a people such as Israel now was and to preach a doctrine that they had no wish to hear, no will to execute, this was the duty of Amos—and a hard duty it was. The people who had grown suddenly rich, and as a consequence or concomitant had released their ideas of morality while they kept up the external formulas of religion, would not gladly listen to a prophet as he declared that there was no good in them and that God was displeased with them. They who lusted for more money and in its pursuit oppressed the poor would not willingly be denounced nor told that God would make a swift end of them. The soldiers, and all their people, who were proud of their victories over the Aramæans, would take no pleasure in hearing that the results of their doings were but temporary and that the little kingdom which they

had strengthened would be sent to its doom by another people because all its deeds were hated by God. They who frequented the sacred shrines at Bethel and Dan, paid the demands of the priests and conformed to the religious usages which they were told came down from Moses and from God, would be unhappy listeners to a prophet who stormed or sneered against the whole system and told them ironically to go to their shrines while he made it clear that none of their worship was accepted by God or would be of any use to them. Indeed, there was nothing in the message of Amos which could appeal to these people, for he was sent not to tickle their ears, but to awake a slumbering conscience; not to minister to vanity either national or personal, but to call men to repentance, set up new standards of righteousness and of justice, and remind men of a jealous God. Nor was there in the man's appearance aught to attract the eye and appeal to the sense of interest. He would look like a shepherd, and the hands that he stretched out in appeal or shook in warning were stained with the acrid juices of the fig, bronzed by the weather, and hardened by struggles with wild beasts. The elegant and refined people would not be willing to flock after such a man, nor glad to hear a message from his lips which prated ever in solemn tones of righteousness and sounded a constant refrain—doom, *doom*, DOOM.

The Advantages. There were, however, compensating advantages. The prophet was a man of ability—nay, it would not be too much to say a man of genius. He knew men and had penetrated the secrets of their hearts; he had felt the pangs of poverty and entered into the agonies of their need; the common people were his people and they, at least, would hear him gladly, as later generations of similar folk would listen to the Lord. He had the gift of speech, the power of words, that amazing, incomprehensible feeling for expression which would send a thrill from ear to heart. These were no mean advantages, but an advantage which outweighed all these was his, and he has himself told us what it was. Listen to his big, thunderous voice as he pours it out: "Jehovah took me from following the flock, and Jehovah said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel" (7. 15). That is it. He had, deep in his heart, the assurance of a divine commission—Jehovah called him and sent him to this task. He was sure of it. Now no human being can have, in his life, so strengthening a conviction as that. It gives a man power over other men, for other men feel the man's sincerity and recognize his authority and bend before his will in cases where they would otherwise mock and pass on.

The Preacher Preaches. And now we must see,

by the power of imagination, this man in the streets of Bethel, a little crowd of its inhabitants about him. He has a message of righteousness to those who have worked evil, and a message of justice to those who have been oppressors, and a message of danger and state destruction to those whose pride had been born in victories and nourished upon success. How will he deliver his message so that men will listen? Shall he begin with a ringing denunciation, with scarifying words, with threats of doom? If he do —he will be stoned to death or driven from the city without any real hearing. He is far too wise and prudent for that. He will begin with something that they will be willing to hear and thence pass on to smite them with words that cut and burn. He has a message from God, and he has also heavenly wisdom for its delivery. He begins, therefore, by denouncing Israel's enemies and by threatening them with the vindictive anger of the Almighty. He begins with Damascus, whose people the armies of Israel had conquered, and threatens them with the destruction of their city and captivity in a foreign land. He does not say who would be the agent to accomplish this at God's behest, but we know that he means the Assyrians. When he had finished with them, he turns in the same way to denounce the Philistines of Gaza and the other cities allied to it, and then in turn come the people of Tyre, the

Edomites, and the Ammonites, and the Moabites. All these were now or had been enemies of Israel, and as Amos went about Bethel, stopping here or there to speak to the crowds that ever grew larger and more enthusiastic, his fame would spread over the city and through the country round about. Men are ready enough to believe what they will to believe, and few things are sweeter to the ear than the denunciation of enemies, and threats of the divine wrath upon them. Amos was laying the foundation, and when he felt the people ready for the real message, he turned upon them with an invective far exceeding anything that he had said of their enemies. O, the skill, the wisdom of his method. This is indeed a great preacher.

The Book of Amos. The book, as we now have it, contains a summary of the prophet's message, probably written down soon after his public work was over and done. We must think of him as standing in the streets of Bethel speaking to the crowd of listeners, and then again delivering his message somewhere else in the city, either immediately or days or even weeks later. When he wrote his book he would naturally reproduce the exact phraseology of portions of his sermons, and merely summarize others. The book as we read it makes an impression of unity and ordered progress, and burns with passionate earnestness. One feels in it

the preacher's gift of direct appeal, but one perceives also a great literary skill in the arrangement and organization of the matter.

Leaving aside for a moment all question of inspiration and its effects, it is very interesting to observe the skill of this simple and uneducated man dealing eloquently and powerfully with the ancient Hebrew tongue and putting his whole message into a form to impress hundreds of generations since his day. This sense of the values of words, this feeling for style is inborn; the schools cannot produce it, though they may help to polish and refine it.

Reading the Book of Amos. There is only one sure way of learning to know Amos, and that is by repeated reading of his book. Read it through at a sitting. Read it again slowly and part by part, for it falls naturally into three parts: (a) chapters 1 and 2; (b) chapters 3 to 6; and (c) chapters 7 to 9. Then read it again at a sitting and yet again in its several parts. So will it gradually appear to your mind that you are in the presence of a great man, a man of unusual gifts apart altogether from his religious message. Remember the age of this book, 760 years before Christ—a long while ago, and none of the great nations about Israel were able to produce at that time anything to match it. We are so much accustomed to turning over the

pages of the Bible that familiarity has dulled the edge of wonder. We may well wonder as we read Amos.

Suggestions for Study

1. The Bible. The book of Amos, the whole book of Amos to be read again and again.

2. The Commentaries. F. C. Eiselen, *The Minor Prophets.* S. R. Driver, *Joel and Amos* (Cambridge Bible for Schools).

CHAPTER VII

ISAIAH, THE COURT PREACHER

The book of Amos is Amos the man and prophet. He preached and then wrote down his messages in summary as a whole, in parts using the very language which had fallen from his lips. When we read the book thoughtfully, carefully, using mind and reason, we see the man. But in the case of the book of Isaiah the matter is quite different. The book of Isaiah does not reveal the man at a glance because he did not write it as Amos wrote his book. Isaiah indeed both preached and wrote, and his writing is there in that wonderful book, needing only to be searched out by the minds that God has given us, and by proper methods which these our minds have discovered, improved and to a certain degree perfected. The book of Isaiah speaks indeed through one divine voice, but not through one human voice. It contains not only what Isaiah said but also that which was spoken by his pupils, by the men who were trained directly or indirectly by him, who spoke or wrote, either or both under his influence on the human side, as did all of them

under inspiration on the divine side. It is our cheerful and pleasant task, under the guidance of generations of thoughtful and learned men, to look first in the book for the great original Isaiah, and then later to look at a follower of his who, working in his spirit, and in the divine light, fitted his message to other needs in later times.

The Scene Changes. Amos preached in the streets of Bethel, in the northern kingdom, though, as we have seen, he came from the southern kingdom, the kingdom of Judah. He foresaw the collapse of the kingdom of Israel and threatened it in burning and passionate words. The end justified his prescience. He was uttering his declarations about the year 760 B. C., amid the universal plaudits which the great victories of Jeroboam II had produced. To superficial observers the future looked bright, while Amos was filled with the sound of doom. About 745 B. C., Hosea saw, with breaking heart, that there was no escape. Amos had foreseen the coming war against his people, war sent by his people's God. He had told his people that it would come against Damascus (Amos 1. 3-6), and Gaza (1. 6, 7), and Tyre (1. 9, 10), and Edom (1. 11, 12), and Ammon (1. 13-15), and Moab (2. 1-3), and Judah (2. 4, 5), and Israel (2. 6ff). That must be a great power which should be strong enough to assail victoriously and beat

cruelly all these nations. Amos does not name it; he does not say, "The Assyrian army is coming"—that would have been contrary to the custom of the early prophets. What he does say is, "Therefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah: An adversary!—even round about the land; and he shall bring down thy strength from thee, and thy palaces shall be plundered" (Amos 3. 11). There is no mention of Assyria, you observe. Yet Amos knew that it would be the Assyrians who should thus execute judgment upon Israel, for there are hints enough in his book to show us whom he had in mind. Hosea also, though in words more mild and gentle, declared that his people were to suffer, and rose, at times, into passionate description of fearful horrors: "*Samaria shall bear her guilt; for she hath rebelled against her God: they shall fall by the sword; their infants shall be dashed in pieces, and their women with child shall be ripped up*" (Hos. 13. 16). Toward this catastrophe the nation was blindly plunging. Let us see.

The Preparations in Israel. The preparations in Israel were weakness, irreligion, and sin, and these were so intermingled and related that it is not worth while to spend much time in any effort to disentangle them, but rather to plunge right into the mass and the mess and see bravely how the people of Israel were preparing their own doom. (a) The

land was preparing for the coming of the Assyrians by its own political weakness. It was visibly decaying in vitality, shifting from one royal family to another. Look at the changes as they are here set down from the end of Solomon's reign and onward:

Jeroboam I,	937–915	First Dynasty
Nadab	915–913	
Boasha	913–889	Second Dynasty
Elah	889–887	
Zimri	One week	Third Dynasty
Omri	887–875	Fourth Dynasty
Ahab	875–853	
Ahaziah	853–851	
Jehoram	851–842	
Jehu	842–814	Fifth Dynasty
Jehoahaz	814–798	
Jehoash	798–783	
JeroboamII,	783–743	
Zechariah and Shallum	743	Sixth Dynasty
Menahem	743–738	Seventh Dynasty
Pekahiah	738–737	
Pekah	737–733	Eighth Dynasty
Hoshea	733/2–722	Ninth Dynasty

These frequent changes from one royal family to another are symbols and signs of weakness, and were an invitation to violence from without, for the political disorganization of the country would prevent any proper defense of its borders. There was a predatory nation, the Assyrian, ready to take advantage of so great an opportunity. (b) The social weakness was even greater than the political. Amos had not spared in laying bare the oppression of the poor, the maladministration of justice, and all the complicated and unwise dispositions of social life reflected in luxury and ease. It is a sad picture which he paints and Hosea fully confirms it. A

nation thus debased in all its social relations was not likely to be able to resist the dangers which Assyrian might was assuredly preparing. (c) But bad as were the political and social situations the religious was by far the worst. Religion was the life of the Hebrew state, and spiritual religion had sunk to a low state. Amos had smitten it a severe blow and it gave forth a hollow sound. Hosea had pierced it and revealed its emptiness. Israel had forsaken Jehovah or had at least failed in many ways to keep its precepts. The hour was swiftly approaching when Jehovah would forsake his people and give them over to sore punishment at the hands of the Assyrians.

The Preparations in Assyria. The Assyrians were a robber people. Their country was small and much of it was infertile. They lived in considerable degree by plundering their neighbors by means of raids carried out by fierce and relentless soldiery. They have left us hundreds of inscriptions which contain a merciless exposure of the national policy. In all directions did they raid and plunder and then exact annual contributions of tribute. It was inevitable that the lands in western Asia should arouse their cupidity and attract them to campaigns along the shores of the Mediterranean. The first Assyrian king who made assault upon the west and drew Israel into the fray was Shalmaneser III (859-824

B. C.), who fought a great battle at Karkar in the year 854 against a coalition of eleven or twelve states. Of that coalition Ahab, king of Israel, was a member, contributing two thousand chariots and ten thousand men. The Assyrian king claimed a victory, but he did not break down the defense. He renewed the fight again and again until, in 842, when Ahab was dead and Jehu had just ascended the throne, he had much better fortune, for Jehu sent him costly gifts instead of fighting him off. The Assyrians got their first deadly grip on Israel and would never wholly relax it until the end of the Hebrew commonwealth.

The Crash. The crash of the northern kingdom, the kingdom of Israel, did not come suddenly. The Assyrians could wait and close round the little kingdom by a series of moves. Little did they know that all that happens was providentially directed toward greater issues and more wonderful results. In 745 there came to the Assyrian throne a man whose name seems originally to have been Pul, or Pulu, who adopted the royal name Tiglathpileser IV. In the years 739 and 738 he was fighting in Aram, and while there king Menahem of Israel sent him a great tribute, estimated by some to be about $2,000,000, to "confirm the kingdom in his hand," as there were probably rival claimants to the throne (2 Kings 15. 17-22). By this act the Assyrians

gained a new hold upon Israel, and on an Assyrian inscription there stands the name of Menahem as a tribute payer to an Assyrian king. Ahab never did that. It was not long until Tiglathpileser invaded the land of Naphtali and carried off many of its people into captivity (2 Kings 15. 29). That was bad enough, but it was not final; there was far worse in store. In 725 Shalmaneser V, king of Assyria, invaded Israel and besieged Samaria, which offered a stubborn and protracted resistance. For three years the city held out, and then Shalmaneser died and a masterful successor, Sargon II, came to the throne, and in his first year, 722 B. C., the city surrendered and 27,290 inhabitants of the little kingdom were carried off into captivity. So ends Israel, the kingdom of Israel—a tragedy indeed, but a tragedy inevitable and foreseen by the prophets.

What about Judah? The southern kingdom had an existence far more stable, and here's the list of its kings to prove it:

Rehoboam	937–920	Amaziah	796 (?)–782 (?)
Abijam	920–917	Uzziah	782 (?)–740 (or 737)
Asa	917–876	Jotham (co-regent)	751–740 (or 737)
Jehoshaphat	876–851		
Jehoram	851–843		
Ahaziah	843–842	Ahaz	737 (?)–715 (?)
Athaliah	842–836	Hezekiah	715 (?)–686 (?)
Joash	836–796 (?)		

See how much longer these kings reigned than those of Israel, and these were all of one dynasty,

all of the house of David. Some of the dates are very doubtful, and though I have inserted query marks enough to disfigure the page, I might with much reason have added a few more, for the whole chronological scheme is beset with difficulties. But for our purpose that matters little; the real point is clear enough, that the southern kingdom was far more stable than the northern.

A New Prophet. In the year that King Uzziah died a young man was called to be a prophet. This may have been as early as 740 or as late as 737. The story of his call is told with brilliant and emotional words in the sixth chapter of the book. The father of this new prophet had given him the great religious name Isaiah, which means the salvation of Jehovah, or the help of Jehovah, or Jehovah saves, or Jehovah helps. His was to be a long life, for he was certainly exercising the prophetic office for not less than forty years and perhaps for a longer period. It was a time of sore testing and of grievous national disasters, and the prophet who had to live in it and give help and direction to his people needed sorely to have the divine help in his own life. The events of Isaiah's personal life can no longer be traced out, and we have but little to say of his career. He was a citizen of Jerusalem, and there his entire life was spent. His family must have been distinguished, for he had ready access to the king. He was once

married and had sons to whom he gave names emblematic of his country's history. His prophetic work extended through the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, having begun, as we have seen, in the very year that Uzziah died. Every event of his time he followed closely and interpreted it in the light of divine revelation, and in many critical situations he took an energetic part in court politics. His whole life was full of activity and crowded with incident. In general we may summarize his work in this way. Under Jotham it went smoothly, and under Ahaz there came a serious break. The king called the Assyrians to his help and paid them tribute (Isa. 7. 3 ff.), an act which Isaiah strongly disapproved. To him it was a crisis in the relations between Israel and her God Jehovah, as from his point of view it expressed disloyalty to Jehovah and distrust in his power to save and protect his own people. In an impassioned interview with Ahaz, Isaiah was accompanied by his son Shear-jashub, whose name signifies "Remnant-shall-turn," that is, a part only of the people shall really turn to Jehovah. It seemed like despair, as though Isaiah knew in advance that he would not succeed in moving either king or people, but only a part of them to give up this madness and trust God. He did fail and then retired from all public effort and wrote out a record of his teaching and delivered it into

the custody of a band of disciples (Isa. 8. 16-18). Under Hezekiah Isaiah came again into public work and had great influence, until the king fell under the influence of a party which persuaded him to refuse the annual tribute to Assyria, and rely on Egypt for assistance. Isaiah did his utmost to prevent this disastrous move, and predicted with tremendous force and wonderful clarity the dreadful issue. Then the prophet vanishes from our sight and we know him no more. There is a legend that he perished during the reign of Manasseh, being sawn asunder.

The Great Messages. The life and work of Isaiah are revealed, as is also the man, in his great sermons, which have nourished the souls of millions outside Israel since first they were spoken. They are not dead, but still living, and we must seek out from them some to which we can give our heed, for it is impossible to study them all in this little book. Let us confine our attention at the moment to three, namely, the call, the period of the siege of Ashdod, and the invasion of Sennacherib. These will furnish some idea of the prophet's skill as a preacher, and some measure of the content of his message.

The Call. It were foolish here to say much of the sixth chapter of Isaiah unless and until you, dear reader, have laid down this little book and,

taking up the book of Isaiah, have read the chapter again and again in the Revised Version. There you will see a chapter "unrivaled in the Old Testament both for grandeur of conception and the majestic simplicity of its style. The narrative is in prose: the speeches are rhythmical. . . . The consciousness of standing in a peculiar relation to God, of personal reconciliation to him, of being in his council, and bearing a definite commission straight from himself, dates from the moment when in an ecstasy he 'saw the Lord.' The vision is undoubtedly an actual experience, not the mere embodiment of an idea; it occurred in the death-year of Uzziah, as the prophet, looking back after some lapse of time, distinctly recalls. Then Isaiah saw God, not indeed with his bodily eyes, but in a prophetic trance, in which the ordinary operations of the mind were suspended and spiritual realities assumed concrete and visible forms" (Skinner). The last clause, translated in the Revised Version—"so the holy seed is the stock thereof"—is not in the Septuagint, the ancient Greek Version, and probably was not in Isaiah's writing, but is probably an addition by some ancient annotator. The rest of the passage grows in power and in moving quality the more we study it. It is a window into the soul, and a glorious vista into the life of a great man. It shows us that "at the time of his call Isaiah became conscious that

he was to be a teacher whose primary task was to warn his people of judgment to come, of judgment which was to issue in the extermination of his nation" (Gray). Let us now see how he set out and carried on this mission by two examples.

The Siege of Ashdod. It will be remembered that in the year 722 or 721 Sargon, king of Assyria, received the surrender of Samaria and brought to an end the kingdom of Israel. The people of Judah must have been alarmed by that dreadful catastrophe, yet were there some, perhaps many, who in blindness or ignorance or false pride or sheer stupidity could not see what it meant. The Assyrian empire was growing apace, and it would not be long before Judah would feel the full weight of its heavy hand. There were, indeed, men who foolishly believed that with the help of Egypt and Ethiopia Judah might be delivered altogether from the all-conquering Assyrians. Isaiah had a better appreciation of the situation than that, and at the command of Jehovah took a most strange course to impress the people. For three years he went about through the whole land, "walking naked and barefoot" (Isa. 20. 2), which means that he threw off the rough sackcloth or coarse linen garment worn by mourners and also by prophets and walked about not actually nude, but with no covering but his undergarment. "The action was expressive of the

deepest degradation, and involved no small sacrifice for a man of Isaiah's position. But that he actually performed it cannot reasonably be questioned" (Skinner). At the end of the time he published an interpretation of this strange act in the words which are now in the book of Isaiah, chapter 20. Right at the beginning of the chapter Isaiah mentions by name the Assyrian king, Sargon, and nowhere else in the Old Testament does his name occur. It used to be thought by some that there never had been an Assyrian king of this name, but now, wonderful to say, we have inscriptions of this very king, in which, while he yet lived, he caused to be written an account of the very episode in history to which Isaiah makes reference in this chapter. The king of the Philistine city of Ashdod, whose name was Azuri, had refused to pay the annual tribute and joined with neighboring states in the vain hope of defying the Assyrians. Sargon deposed him and put his twin-brother, Akhimiti, in his place. But the people overthrew him and set over themselves a man variously called Yamani or Yatna. Sargon could brook no such impudence as this, and made a forced march into the west only to find that the terror-stricken Yamani had fled. But let us hear Sargon tell the story in his own words, as I translate it into English:

"With my soldiers, who do not depart from my

side, in the place where I am staying, I marched against Ashdod. Yamani, who heard from afar the approach of my column, fled to the borders of Egypt, which lies before Melucha, and was seen no more. Ashdod, Gath, Ashdudimmu I besieged and conquered; I seized as booty his gods, his wife, his sons and daughters, possessions and goods, the treasures of his palaces, together with the people of his land. Those cities I took anew, and caused to dwell in them people of lands, which were the spoil of my hands, from the lands of the East. I set my officers over them, I added them to the people of Assyria, they gave obedience."

Isaiah knew this, and felt sure that the Assyrians would go on and conquer the Egyptians and the Ethiopians, though it would really be a long time before this would come to pass.

The Invasion of Sennacherib. When Sennacherib came to the throne after the death of his father Sargon, he was soon confronted by a rebellion in the west in which Judah under King Hezekiah joined. That was a mad business, and Isaiah was a central figure in the kingdom in those days. It is therefore not surprising that when the book of Isaiah was put into its final and present form there should be set down in chapters 36-39 a historical story of the great invasion, which is certainly taken from 2 Kings 18. 13 to 20. 19. Judah had never known before so

frightful a tragedy as was this. Judah was horribly ravaged, yet Sennacherib was not able to take the city of Jerusalem. God had yet other things to accomplish before the city of imperishable memories should fall beneath an invader's heel. We have Sennacherib's own story of the campaign in the year 701, and also hints sufficient to make it clear that he was again in the west and threatening Jerusalem some years later, both events being here combined in Isaiah and in Kings. It is a good thing for us to remember just now that these chapters were not written by Isaiah, for that will enable us a little later the better to understand how the book was put together when we come to study the glorious prophecies in chapters 40-66.

The Messiah. The greatest contribution which Isaiah made to the world's religious thought is the conception of the ideal King of the lineage of David. These prophecies are found in 9. 1-7, 11. 1-9 and 32. 1 ff. (compare also 33. 17), and the first one of them is especially precious, for therein the Messiah is called "Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace," but in 11. 1 ff. there is also a wonderfully beautiful touch in the portrayal of the Messiah as a shoot from the stock of Jesse, and endowed with the spirit of Jehovah wonderfully to fulfill his royal functions. Who was this marvelous person whom Isaiah thus saw in dim

and shadowy, yet in strangely brilliant flashes of light? We know, you and I know, for we look backward, not forward, as did Isaiah, and we know who it was who long after Isaiah's time came among men and did all these things and many more, far more than ever any prophet dreamed. But it is a great honor to Isaiah that he set all these great thoughts and hopes a-going. He who rounded out and completed them was Jesus Christ our Saviour.

Suggestions for Study

1. The Bible. Read Isaiah, chapters 1 to 35, omitting chapters 13, 14 and 24-27, for these chapters are now known to come from other hands. There are indeed some other passages not by the prophet, but they need not now be designated.

2. The best brief commentary for a general outline will be found in Peake's *Commentary on the Bible*, pp. 436-459.

3. For a fuller exposition see *The Book of the Prophet Isaiah,* by J. Skinner (*Cambridge Bible for Schools*).

CHAPTER VIII

JEREMIAH, THE PROPHET OF THE INNER LIFE

Is it possible that there are prophets of the outer life? Yea, verily. Moses was a prophet of the outer life. When Moses gave a command, saying, "Thou shalt not kill," he was addressing the outer life, not the inner. "Thou shalt not steal"—this also deals with the outer life, not the inner. But you will say that these acts come from hidden springs, from the mind and heart, and therefore they do deal with the inner life. This is true, but you must remember that you are recognizing the inwardness of the idea because you have learned it from Christ. But if you will put yourself back into the days of Moses, thirteen centuries before the coming of our Lord, you will realize that the time had not come to recognize the origins of every evil deed in the depths of the human soul. Now there is, however, this to be said, that the beginnings of these later ideas are vaguely discernible in the words of Moses, for the last of the Ten Commandments says, "Thou shalt not covet," and that is surely an idea which touches the deeper

things of the human soul. But it is only one tenth of the Ten Commandments, and we must not magnify it overmuch. That which is true of Moses is true also of Elijah and of Amos, whose life and work we were studying a while ago. Both these men were dealing mostly with the external things of life. It is true also of Isaiah, though he penetrated more deeply than Amos and far more deeply than Elijah into the great deeps of the human heart.

But now we are come to a greater prophet than Moses, or Elijah, or Amos, or Isaiah, for we have come to Jeremiah, the greatest of the prophets, and greatest on this very ground, that he was the prophet of the inner life. He is not greater than these in certain other respects, for he surely does not equal Isaiah, at his best, in the majesty of his great pictures, in a certain sublimity, in portrayals of heavenly scenes. He does not equal Amos in that almost uncanny gift of illustration which gives spiritual things a parallel in the common affairs of everyday life, and it might even be maintained with a fair show of reason that Amos could offer passages of appeal or of denunciation which Jeremiah could scarcely parallel. But the inner life, the inmost inner life—Jeremiah is supreme there, and we must trace his life and his message until we see how this was reached and wherein the prophet's supreme distinction lay.

The Name. Let us begin at the very beginning by asking a question about the prophet's name. We shall remember what Elijah's name meant, and what Amos did signify, and what was the meaning of Isaiah's name, and we move on naturally enough to ask about the name of Jeremiah, and alas! the answer must be that we do not really know, though we may make a guess at it and suppose that it may mean, "Whom Jehovah founds, or establishes." That would be attractive, and with it we may for the moment be content. This much we do at least know, that it fits the man in some particulars, for he was surely a man whom Jehovah established.

The Early Life. Jeremiah was born about the year 650 B. C. in the tiny village of Anathoth, about three and a half miles northeast of Jerusalem. His father was named Hilkiah, who was one of the priests living there. Some distinguished priests had lived there in a sort of banishment in the beginning. There was a very eminent priest named Abiathar, a friend of King David, who was sent there in banishment by Solomon. It seems very probable that Jeremiah was descended from him, and if so he could trace his lineage to good, tender-hearted old Eli at Shiloh. The greatest aristocracy in Israel was the aristocracy of the priesthood, and to that aristocracy Jeremiah clearly belonged. Yet there was little or nothing of the priest about him.

He was a prophet through and through, inside and out, and the greatest of them all—be not impatient at reading that statement again. He must have spent his youth in very quiet surroundings, in the simplicities of a small village, yet with company of the highest and best. Boys are sometimes deeply influenced for life by the company that surrounds their fathers and by the conversation heard or overheard. There would be good talk in Hilkiah's house, earnest talk of priests about the things of God and much discussion of affairs of state—good things for a clever, growing boy to hear. And the great city of holy and stately memories, Jerusalem the magical, was only a short walk away and Jeremiah must have seen it often in his boyhood. The impression it made upon that quick and responsive boyish mind may well be inferred from the intensity of his devotion to the city in later life. He loved it as Isaiah had done before him. So passed the days of youth and manhood's heavy responsibilities were on him.

The Call. Jeremiah was called to be a prophet in the thirteenth year of Josiah, or in the year 626, when he was twenty-three years old. He had described the call and put it down in words warm indeed with feeling, but simple, straightforward, and far from the eloquence in which Isaiah and Ezekiel have described their call. It was set down in chapter

1 and in verses 4-19, and a reading of it shows that it is divided into three parts: (*a*) verses 4-10 state quite bluntly that Jehovah said, "I have appointed thee a prophet unto the nations," and that Jeremiah in most modest fashion responded, "Ah, Lord God! behold I cannot speak: for I am a child." But there was no escape and the "Lord put forth his hand and touched" the prophet's mouth. (*b*) Then the prophet had a vision of an almond tree, verses 11, 12, intended to show him that Jehovah was wakeful to fulfill his word, and (*c*) a second vision, verses 13-19, to teach him that evil would come from the north and upon his people, and he was bidden to *"arise and speak," "for I am with thee, saith the Lord, to deliver thee."*

The Prophet's Personal Life. Jeremiah was never married, because he believed that it was the divine will that he should face duty and privilege quite alone, and he has told us in no dubious way what he understood, saying, "The word of Jehovah came also unto me saying, Thou shalt not take thee a wife, neither shalt thou have sons or daughters, in this place" (16. 1, 2). This was a very different practice from that which was common in Israel. We may remind ourselves of the marriage of Hosea, which proved to be an awful tragedy (Hos. 1-3), yet was of great influence upon his message, for through it he learned a new expression for the love of God

and added a tenderness to his measurement of the divine qualities. On the other hand Ezekiel's married life was a great glory until his wife was suddenly taken away by death and he was forbidden to mourn her loss (Ezek. 24. 15-24). Neither form of marital experience was to be known by Jeremiah, neither misery nor happiness. He was to carry the burden of life alone, nor know in his own house the innocent prattle of children, yet there are not wanting signs that this great man knew the ways of tenderness and understood life's domesticities, as indeed many of the unmarried in all ages have done.

The Prophet's Public Life. We know more of the public life of Jeremiah than of any other of the prophets. This has come about because so much of the book of Jeremiah contains biographical material. We shall see later how the book was composed, and of this also do we know more than is certain of any other prophetical book, for the book contains allusion to the methods used by Jeremiah and by others who worked at its editing, especially the work of Baruch, whose hand had most to do with putting the book together. From the book we learn what Jeremiah was doing and saying during the period from his call to be a prophet in 626 B. C., down to the time when we finally lose sight of him, soon after 586 B. C., when he was carried off to Egypt. He was then probably about sixty-

four years of age, and we have the opportunity of seeing and hearing him for about forty years. We must try to see and to understand what he was doing, and the only way is to learn what was then going on in the world. That is a lively story of war and of politics, and here it is.

A Bit of History. The Assyrians were a robber nation. They plundered, burned or destroyed in all directions. You will recall how they had plundered the tribe of Naphtali in the days of Tiglathpileser IV, carrying off part of the population into captivity, and how in 722 Sargon II destroyed Samaria and brought the northern kingdom to an end, and how in 701 Sennacherib ravaged Judah, though he was not able to take Jerusalem. But this thing could not go on forever and God's vengeance be forever delayed. So in 668 there came to the Assyrian throne Ashurbanipal, last of the great kings, and when his reign ended in 625 there was no king fit to be his successor and able to wield the Assyrian sword in the old way. The Assyrian Empire was doomed, and men began gradually to recognize that the end was drawing nigh. Other nations began to look about to see whether there were not some chance of participation in the plunder, of getting some share of the old Assyrian territory. In 625 in Babylon a Chaldean king began to reign whose name was Nabopolassar, and the weak Assyrian

monarchs who succeeded the great Ashurbanipal were not able to oppose him and try to reestablish Assyrian sovereignty over Babylon. So a big slice was almost silently lopped off the Assyrian Empire. Now in Egypt men also began to think that perhaps they might profit from the Assyrian downfall, and in 609 Necho II, king of Egypt, set out with an army to try. He marched up the coast of Palestine, and Josiah, who was then king of Judah, thinking that his kingdom might ultimately be endangered, had the foolish boldness to march up the backbone of Palestine, and deploying his men at Megiddo, tried battle. Necho was victorious and Josiah was slain (2 Kings 23. 29). He had been a good king and Jeremiah said of him, "He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well. Was not this to know me? saith Jehovah" (Jer. 22. 16). This made a vacancy in the throne of Judah, and Jehoahaz (whom Jeremiah calls Shallum) became king, but ruled only three months until deposed by the victorious Necho, who set Jehoiakim on the throne. Jeremiah laments the fate of Jehoahaz (Jer. 22. 10-12) and thoroughly despised his successor, who was a selfish and unscrupulous ruler (Jer. 22. 13-19). Necho's glory did not last long, for in 605 he was defeated at Carchemish on the Euphrates by Nebuchadrezzar, son of Nabopolassar. This decisive battle was the turning point of the age and Jeremiah fully

appreciated its significance (see Jer., chap. 25). Egyptian power over Palestine was now at an end, and Jehoiakim had to submit to Nebuchadrezzar as his overlord. After three years he revolted (2 Kings 24. 1), and soon the army of Nebuchadrezzar came to lay siege to Jerusalem, but before it was fully invested Jehoiakim died, and was spared the sight which his son Jehoiachin had to face, who, after reigning only three months, *"went out,"* that is, surrendered (2 Kings 24. 12). He was carried away into captivity with about eight thousand of the chief folk of the kingdom, among whom was Ezekiel, the prophet. (Please remember that last mentioned fact and that prophet's name.) Zedekiah was then made king by Nebuchadrezzar under oath and pledges to be obedient to the Babylonians. After seven or eight years he entered into treasonable negotiations with Hophra, king of Egypt, and in 588 Nebuchadrezzar, angered by this faithlessness, began the second siege of Jerusalem. In 586 it fell into his hands, and, horror of horrors, he destroyed it, leaving its temple a blackened heap, and the dear little city a mass of shapeless ruins. That is surely one of the greatest tragedies of human history. During all this period of trouble and sorrow, of rising and falling kingdoms from 626 to 586, Jeremiah lived and suffered agonies of anxiety. No prophet ever had such tasks, such problems

to meet, such darkness in which to preach the God of light.

A Courageous Sermon. During those dreadful forty years Jeremiah's ministry was a prolonged martyrdom. He was called to stand as "a fortified city, and an iron pillar, and brazen walls, against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land" (Jer. 1. 18). Think of it. He was bidden when only about twenty-three or four years of age to go out and oppose everything that kings, princes, priests and people were doing and planning. It was not promised that he should have any success in persuading them into better ways; he was not assured of any success in saving his country. He received but one promise, and here it is: "They shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee: for I am with thee, saith Jehovah, to deliver thee" (Jer. 1. 19). How Jeremiah fulfilled his commission is admirably illustrated in the sermon in chapter 7. 1-28, and you should now lay down this humble little book and read that sermon. I know of nothing in prophetic literature more bold, more stirring, more courageous. You ought to remember that Sennacherib was prevented from taking Jerusalem and had to go home without the chief prize. It seems natural enough that the people should draw the conclusion

that Jerusalem had been protected because the Temple was within its walls. It was easy enough to go further and conclude that the Temple would always protect the city. This view became the occasion of a thunderous sermon by Jeremiah which you have just read in this seventh chapter of his book. The argument of this sermon is that Jehovah's favor and protection are to be secured through amendment of life, through obedience to God's moral law, and not through the presence of the Temple in city and state. In other words, Jeremiah is preaching a spiritual and ethical religion, as over against a religion which would make the Temple a fetish and the whole system of faith a form of magic. But do not think for a moment that such a message would be welcome or even received with willing minds. The priesthood, unless there were here and there some exceptional soul, would be filled with rage against a prophet who could speak almost contemptuously of the Temple (Jer. 7. 4), and had the audacity to declare that the sacrifices and offerings were useless and might be mixed up in any way (Jer. 7. 21), nay even say that neither offerings nor sacrifices were commanded by God when the fathers came out of Egypt (Jer. 7. 22). Nobody had said anything like that since the days of Amos (760 B. C.), and he did not equal it (Amos 5. 25); and priests would be stirred by it into an ungovernable fury. Any-

thing might happen and something did happen immediately.

A Furious Mob. Please read, now, Jeremiah, chapter 26. This chapter refers to the occasion of the great discourse recorded in chapter 7, makes some quotations from it, and tells us what happened after the prophet had spoken. He was set upon by a mob, priests, prophets and people all participating, which threatened him with death (verse 8). The wonder is that they did not kill him on the spot—there must have been some cool heads among them! But he was haled before the judges, here called princes (verse 11), and a demand made that he be put to death by judicial order. Jeremiah made a simple, dignified, and courageous defense (verses 12-15), and the judges gave decision in his favor. This verdict was sustained by an appeal to precedents (verses 17, ff.), and so Jeremiah escaped. This sermon, and the attack by the mob, and the trial occurred in the year 608 or 607 B. C.

Writing the Book. The prophets were primarily speakers, men who spoke for God, but Amos learned also to write his message, and put it down in a form which enabled others to read it aloud so that those who had neither seen the prophet personally nor heard him preach might hear his message from other lips. Jeremiah had almost lost his life in the effort to preach in public, as we have

just seen, and he had actually been put in the stocks because of his frankness of speech on another occasion (Jer. 20. 1-6). Because of these things he had probably been officially warned to keep away from the Temple precincts, and now if you will read chapter 36 you will not only have a most vivid and colorful and even exciting narrative before you, but you will also see how the book of Jeremiah was produced. The first verse gives us the exact year when these events begin, and it was "the fourth year of Jehoiakim," which was 604 B. C., according to our calendar. Jeremiah had now been preaching since 626, or a period of 22 years, and we do not certainly know whether he had ever before written down any of his messages, but whether or not, he had now come to the point where the writing of them was necessary. The method which he adopted was to summon Baruch, who was probably a professional secretary, but was certainly a close personal friend, a confidant and an adherent of the prophet. He was a man of distinguished family, his grandfather Maaseiah having been governor of the city (2 Chron. 34. 8) and his brother Seraiah (Jer. 51. 59) a man sent upon a mission to Babylon. Baruch was fitted in every way for the great duty now to be put upon him, and to him Jeremiah dictated the messages which had been sent to the people of Jerusalem from God

through him. The little book thus formed Baruch took in his hand, and going out among the people read aloud to them the burning words which the prophet had uttered, which perhaps some of them had heard from the prophet directly. In the next year there was a public fast, and then Baruch had a greater opportunity to reach larger numbers of people. The messages then read made a great stir, and Baruch was ordered to bring his written roll before a select number of dignitaries (verse 14), who decided that they must lay the matter before the king (verse 16), but cautioned Baruch and Jeremiah to hide (verse 19), lest the king's anger make an end of them, if the reading should displease him. The king was seated before a brazier, on a cold day, and when the prophecies were read to him from the roll, after the reading of three or four columns (not leaves, nor pages), the king cut off that piece with a knife and tossed it upon the glowing coals in the brazier. So he went on with piece after piece until the whole was consumed, though three of those present had besought him not to do this (verse 25). Having done this he gave orders to take both Baruch and Jeremiah, and if they had not been providentially hidden he would certainly have had them both slain. Maddened by his inability to suppress Jeremiah, full of rage at the spiritual preaching which, if it had free course, would cer-

tainly make an end of the type of religion which an official priesthood was maintaining in Jerusalem, he now thought he might suppress the living word by burning it in a brazier.

Jeremiah could not be hushed up in such a fashion, but dictated the whole set of prophecies again. In the account of this second dictation there is a sentence of great literary importance in verse 32, which runs thus: "and there were added besides unto them many like words." We do not know how much of the present book Jeremiah had dictated in the first instance to Baruch, and are left to surmises more or less probable. But the interesting thing is that when Jeremiah dictated the roll for the second time he made additions. We see here the process of the growth of a prophetic book, and need not be surprised if evidence should appear that other books have grown in a similar way, either by additions or changes made by the author or by his pupils, or by other prophetic spirits in later times.

In the study of the book we must also keep in mind that besides the prophecies uttered by Jeremiah there is also a good amount of biographical material. Its character stamps it as the work of an eyewitness, and we shall not search for any other author of it than Baruch. It is of priceless value, for it reveals to us Jeremiah as a friend and contemporary saw him. This biographical and his-

torical material is especially to be seen in chapters 36 to 44.

The Greatest Old Testament Prophecy. The greatest prophetic passage in the Old Testament is written in Jer. 31. 31-34. I hope you will read it, and then read it again, and after that read it a third time. It is a brief but momentous passage. It implies that the Old Covenant, that is, the Covenant of Sinai, had failed. A New Covenant was to take its place, and this new covenant was to be inscribed upon the hearts of men and not upon tables of stone. The external had proved itself insufficient, the internal should replace it. But there is still more behind these words. It is implied in and supported by the general content of Jeremiah's message that the hearts of men were to be transformed so that they should be willing to receive the new law and covenant, and have the will to do it.

Suggestions for Study

The book of Jeremiah is far too little read. It should be read in the Revised Version, and it were still better to read it in *The Book of Jeremiah*, a Revised Translation with introductions and short explanations, by the Rev. S. R. Driver. For longer and fuller explanations the best help is in *Jeremiah and Lamentations*, by A. S. Peake, 2 Vols. (*The New Century Bible*).

CHAPTER IX

EZEKIEL, THE CHURCHMAN

The books of the prophets in our Bible have their friends, some few, some many, some very many; indeed there is one which seems to have everybody for a friend. The most popular prophetic book seems clearly to be Isaiah—and there is no reason to marvel at that. There must be a good many friends of Amos, for he is every inch a man as well as a prophet, and I have no hesitation in confessing a warm admiration for his little book, which I have surely read scores, if not indeed hundreds of times in Hebrew as well as in English. I sometimes wonder how many people care about Haggai, for whose book I have a sneaking fondness, and always think of it as a chronological joy bell, so perfectly do we know the very days, and months, as well as the years of that prophet's simple little messages. Not nearly enough people love Jeremiah—there can be no doubt of that, and it must be admitted that his book does require some study before one penetrates its secrets. The people who care much about social progress get much

pleasure out of Micah, and there must be a goodly few who have heard Hosea's heart beat and have recognized the weight and poignancy of the message that flows a full current of grief and disappointment. But now comes a very searching statement: who loves Ezekiel's book? I am sorry to say it, but I seriously believe that they are very few. It may be frankly admitted that it lacks much of Isaiah's majestic charm and has none of Jeremiah's melting passion of tenderness, nor does any of it rise to his amazing heights of spiritual insight. Some of the visions have fantastic, even grotesque figures, or so they seem to our sophisticated Western eyes, and there are not wanting patches of a somewhat arid or mechanical ritualism. But when these things have been said all deductions from his fame have surely been made. He has, on the other hand be it said, a fresh and vivid imagination truly poetic, and there are whole chapters in his book filled with inspired visions and burning eloquence. Most people have at some time read the vision of the valley of dry bones, and they who have some imagination have felt a creepy sensation at its magic (chap. 37), and if any prophet ever excelled him in the assertion of individual responsibility (chap. 18) I cannot now recall the place. But laying all these matters aside, he is the true father of ecclesiastical Judaism, and that would alone make him one of

the greatest figures in the ancient Oriental world. Judaism is still a living faith, and men of mark in every form of human endeavor share in its beliefs, practices, and life, and the man who more than any other gave that vast and powerful system its special origin is worthy of our close attention. Furthermore it should not be forgotten that some of the underlying ideas of the ritual system of Roman Catholic Christianity may be traced back through Judaism to him. A great man was this man. Let us have a glance at him and his great book.

The Man. Ezekiel was the son of Buzi, a priest in Jerusalem, and was born about 626 B. C., which, we must remember, was the year in which Jeremiah was called to be a prophet, and it was probable that he saw Jeremiah, heard him speak and quite likely knew him personally. However that may be, we see sufficient evidence in Ezekiel's book that Jeremiah had influenced him, though perhaps not all the passages which are sometimes cited in support of this thesis really do prove it. We must allow that the same or similar ideas may very well have come to the two prophets without either influencing the other.

Ezekiel's name means, "God is strong," and as his father, Buzi, was a priest, and probably of the line of Zadok, Ezekiel would belong to the aristocracy of his day, for, as we have already seen,

the priesthood was an aristocracy, the highest society in the realm, next after the king himself. Ezekiel was happily married, and when his wife died he was forbidden to mourn or weep, but had only the sorry comfort of a permitted sigh (Ezek. 24. 15-18). He was called to be a prophet in the month of July, 593 (1. 2), and as the latest date in his book is the year 570 (29. 17), we know him as a prophet during a period of twenty-two or twenty-three years, a period much shorter than that which was covered by the prophetic work of Jeremiah. He was evidently a man of some means, for he lived in his own house (3. 24; 8. 1; 12. 3 ff.) and was accounted a great man, for the elders of the people, who were their rulers in the captivity, used to come to his house to consult him (8. 1; comp. 14. 1; 20. 1). This is no mean or common or uninteresting person with whose life and book we are now to make a closer acquaintance.

A Bit of History. Troubled indeed were the days through which the prophet lived between 626 and 597. In the year 621, when, if our chronology is correct, he would be a boy of about five years of age, the book of the Law was found in the Temple, and Josiah the king set on foot a most elaborate scheme to cause the observance of its directions. The book thus discovered was our splendid and eloquent book of Deuteronomy, or at least

the central part of the book, comprised in chapters 12 to 26. As a keen and quick-witted boy Ezekiel would hear the discussions going on everywhere about that book, and spent his boyhood and youth and early manhood surrounded by the influences which it produced in the kingdom. That was a time of testing, for men had, perforce, to make up their minds what attitude to take to this book, which we call Deuteronomy. It was a book which claimed to declare the will and purposes of God, with blessings for those who kept its commands and cursings upon those who did not. Its effect was revolutionary, and we have no parallel to it in our religious history in modern times. It was the means of bringing a severe test of faith, for they who believed and then tried to live out their belief in action accepted the reasoning that if you did as it commanded God would bless you. This is the very thing that Josiah the king did, yet in the year 608 B. C. Josiah fell in battle, bravely fighting to save Judah from the rule of Necho II, king of Egypt. That was a fearful test of faith in those days. One cannot but wonder what Ezekiel thought of it. He was now probably about eighteen years of age and at a time of life when severe trials of faith often come. There was no escape from this issue, for while all Jerusalem was in an agony of grief over the king's death, the air was vibrant with question-

ing which must have taken forms somewhat like this: "Why did God suffer this faithful servant Josiah to die?" "Why did not God bless him with long life, according to the promises of the great book of the Law which had been found and its observance enjoined by him?" Such questions must have come to the young man's mind, but he rose above them, faith survived, and he moved on toward greater trials. The trials now were national and of immense importance. We have seen, as we studied the life of Jeremiah, how thickly tragedies fell upon Judah. Jehoahaz became king only to be displaced by Jehoiakim on the orders of Necho II, and when he was superseded by the Babylonians after Nebuchadrezzar's smashing victory at Carchemish in 605 the Jews felt a heavy hand upon them. After three years Jehoiakim revolted, and died before the full punishment which Nebuchadrezzar planned to bring upon the city had fallen, and his successor Jehoiachin was borne away into captivity in Babylon. It has been well said that the exile of this poor sad king "formed the chief landmark" of Ezekiel's life. It is given to us after the lapse of so many centuries to feel the grief of Ezekiel, for he has expressed it most tenderly in the beautiful elegy over the two princes who had been carried off into captivity, the one, Jehoahaz, into Egypt, and the other, Jehoiachin, into Babylonia. "The elegy

represents the princes of Judah as young lions, reared among lions by the mother lioness, but caught in pits by the nations and carried away" (Davidson). The mother lioness is Judah and this is the way in which the prophet describes the carrying off of Jehoahaz to Egypt, "Moreover, take thou up a lamentation for the princes of Israel and say, What was thy mother? A lioness: she couched among lions, in the midst of the young lions she nourished her whelps. And she brought up one of her whelps: he became a young lion and he learned to catch the prey; he devoured men. The nations also heard of him; he was taken in their pit: and they brought him with hooks unto the land of Egypt" (Ezek. 19. 1-4). It is very interesting to turn back and read what Jeremiah said of this prince, also called Shallum, in the finely tender passage, Jer. 22. 10-12. Jehoahaz died in Egypt. Let us now continue this elegy of Ezekiel's and see what he says of Jehoiachin. He is speaking still of the mother lioness Judah and on he goes thus: "Now when she saw that she had waited and her hope was lost, then she took another of her whelps, and made him a young lion. And he went up and down among the lions; he became a young lion, and he learned to catch the prey; he devoured men. . . . Then the nations set against him on every side from the provinces, and they spread their net over

him; he was taken in their pit. And they put him in a cage with hooks, and brought him to the king of Babylon; they brought him into strongholds, that his voice should be no more heard upon the mountains of Israel" (Ezek. 19. 5-9). Ah, they were quite human, these prophets. See, how kindly they lamented these poor kings! And Ezekiel, one might have found a very good excuse for him if he had given very little thought to Jehoiachin, for the poor creature was not much of a king, and Ezekiel had troubles of his own, for in the year that Jehoiachin was carried off into captivity so also was Ezekiel himself, for he was one of the deported, one of the eight thousand carried off by Nebuchadrezzar.

In Exile. It was hard to be carried off against one's will into a far country, but Ezekiel seems not to have suffered any serious physical or mental hardships at the hands of the Babylonians. The Jews were well treated, were left to regulate their own affairs as they willed, and the qualities of industry, frugality, patience, and perseverance which have been so often manifested among them in our own times were not wanting then. They prospered in the land of exile, many of them became independent and some apparently very rich, and when in the year 537 permission was received from Cyrus to return to their homeland many of them refused,

and continued to be Babylonians, just as now so many Jews are Englishmen or Americans and just as loyal as any others. There in Babylonia, among a people some of whom must already have begun to feel somewhat content, while others were yet homesick for Jerusalem, Ezekiel was called to be a prophet. He was living among exiles at a place called Tel-Abib on the banks of the Chebar, which was a large canal in southern Babylonia, and there he had the great vision, which made him a prophet. He has described the scene for us in chapter 1, verses 1-28, and it would appear that it came upon him in a sort of trance or ecstasy. The description is very rich in imagery, some of it difficult to understand because the figures are partly Hebrew and partly Babylonian. The prophet himself is surely convinced that he is attempting to describe that which never can be described, and content to give impressions rather than to paint pictures. There is a chariot in the vision with wheels, and wings propel it, and there is a fire and the whole great complex of sight and seen and unseen is intended to set forth the omnipresence and omnipotence and omniscience of God. This vision is followed by the call and invitation of the prophet into his office, and this is all set forth in the passage, 2. 1 to 3. 21, and in this the character of the people to whom he is sent and the nature of

his mission are made plain. He is to be a "watchman," he is to warn particularly the exiles in Tel-Abib, and there his duty is to turn the sinner from his evil ways, and to persuade and strengthen the righteous that they do not fall into unrighteousness.

Ezekiel and the Faith. How did Ezekiel fulfill his mission? What message did he give to the people who heard him and to the ages which were later to read the book which he had written probably when he was an old man? It has been sometimes said, in disparagement of him, that he was really a priest disguised as a prophet, and that he was far more interested in ritual than in the spiritual life. But the judgment is ill balanced. It might with more propriety be said that he was a prophet disguised as a priest. But even if the priest in him were superior to the prophet he would still have a just place in the economy of God, for there is far too much to know and to say of God to be confined within the limits of what we are pleased to call our prophetic view of religion. There are millions of men who still find God in ritual, liturgy, and ceremonial institutions, and we have no particular right to exclude that type of religious thought from the divine categories of religion, or those ways from the true road toward God. But whatever we say of that, let us be just to Ezekiel and admit that the dear old prophetic messages are in his book.

He does insist a good deal upon the ceremonial, but he does not forget the deeper need, for he says, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh" (36. 26). But it is also to be remembered that he is distinctively the prophet of the individual, for where many of his predecessors were busied chiefly with a holy nation, he is earnest about a holy individual, and that he is sure of God's interest in the saving of men, for a passage very dear to struggling saints is his, in the words of sweet comfort, "As I live, saith the Lord Jehovah, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" (33. 11), and he never has any doubt about the love of God, for in the chapter concerning the poor foundling girl (16) to whom Israel is likened it is God's love that restores.

The Book as a Whole. Ezekiel wrote the whole book which bears his name save for a few inconsiderable passages. It therefore does not bother us with any critical questions of authorship, as do Jeremiah and to a greater degree Isaiah. Open it anywhere and read a bit, and you will be hearing Ezekiel speak in the land of Exile. The book falls into two equal divisions of twenty-four chap-

ters each, and we shall do well to get some idea of the content of these separate divisions.

I. Division I, chapters 1-24. We have already seen that the first section of this (1. 1 to 3. 21) is taken up with the prophet's call to his work and with the strange symbols in which the divine majesty was set forth. After that the prophet goes on to set forth his special message concerning Jerusalem. Remember that he was an exile in Babylonia, having been carried thither in 597, and that Jerusalem was still standing, and its social and political and economic life was flowing onward about as it did in earlier and better days. Nebuchadrezzar had really not treated it very harshly as things then were in that Oriental world, and there were people who believed that the city was inviolate because it was inviolable, because it was Jehovah's city, and he would protect it against all evil, and forever. Now that was an ignorant and foolish idea. God was bound only to protect it so long as it fulfilled his purposes in it, and when it ceased to do this it would have to suffer, and perhaps come to an end. There were not wanting false prophets who preached the doctrine of the inviolability of the city and thought doubtless that they honored God in so doing. Ezekiel knew a better doctrine of the divine nature than that, and therefore after he was called to be a prophet in 593 or 592 he set himself

industriously to get that folly out of the heads of his fellow captives and by whatever means of communication there were to get it also out of the heads of the people of Jerusalem. From the beginning of his preaching down to August, 590, he spoke the threats and denunciations and parables and symbolical prophecies which are now found written in chapters 3. 22 to the end of chapter 23. He was then silent until January, 587, when he uttered the final symbolic oracle which is in chapter 24. At that time Nebuchadrezzar was beginning to invest the city, and anybody with eyes could see that the beginning of the demonstration of the prophet's foresight was at hand.

II. Division II, chapters 25-48. This division of the book subdivides into two chief sections: (a) Prophecies of the restoration of Israel after the judgments on the other peoples (25-39), and (b) Vision of the final and perfected state of the Lord's People (40-48). The first of these sections prepares the way for the second, for Israel cannot be perfected until the nations that have so grievously maltreated Israel shall have been brought to know the God of Israel, and shall therefore no longer lift their proud hands against his people. When all this has been accomplished then the renewed Israel shall enter upon its inheritance, and the second section of this division comes on, beginning with chapter

40, with the account of the new Temple buildings as the prophet foresees and predicts them. This great passage from 40-48 contains no new doctrine of God. The prophet has concluded that part of his work. It does not describe the way of deliverance, for that has already been done. It gives only the final condition "of redemption and felicity." Some of the symbols seem crude to us, who have come up through the larger light of Christ as the Reformation has clarified his teaching. But there can be no doubt of the immense influence of these chapters on the history of Judaism. They made Judaism.

The Choice Bits. To those who have neither time nor inclination to master the whole book of the prophet Ezekiel there might be some excuse for offering the choice of a few, a very few passages which should by all means be made familiar by repeated reading. Here's a brave effort to name them in as few words as may be.

1. Chapter 18. "The Moral Freedom and Responsibility of the Individual Man before God." This is one of the great chapters of prophetic literature. Its purpose is practical, not speculative or theological. The prophet desires to induce men to turn from their transgressions, and his exhortations are addressed to individuals, and not to the nation which the prophet expects to perish. The doctrine which he now sets forth leans much on

Jeremiah, but goes beyond him in elaboration of the effort to meet the questions of the men of his time and turn them to practical value in right living. It was primarily addressed to men who believed that they were hopelessly bound in the consequences of their fathers' sins. Read it in this light and you will feel the stirring and the weight of the solemn words.

2. Chapter 34. The Messianic King. The past history of Ezekiel's people is here presented under the allegory of a flock, over which the shepherds who were its rulers have exercised an evil or an abusive or neglectful rule. Therefore they are to be replaced by Jehovah himself (verses 11-16), and in these verses his care of them is described in a passage of the greatest tenderness and beauty—worthy indeed of any of the prophets. But as Jehovah is above there will be also an earthly shepherd here below to represent him, and he will usher in the covenant of peace, the Messianic age (verses 23-31).

3. Chapter 37. 1-14. The Valley of Dry Bones. Everybody knows this passage, but nobody knows it too well. It is a prophecy of the resurrection, not of individuals, but of the nation whose bones, figuratively speaking, have long been scattered. It was the prophet's great privilege to call them together, and then it was God's prerogative to give them breath once more.

So we take leave of Ezekiel, hoping only that he may seem a bit more real, more human, and more worthy of our thought than we may before have thought him.

Suggestions for Study

The best Commentary is, The Book of the Prophet Ezekiel, in the Revised Version, with notes and introduction by the late A. B. Davidson, D.D., LL.D., revised by the late A. W. Streane, D.D. (*The Cambridge Bible for Schools*).

CHAPTER X

THE UNNAMED PROPHET OF THE EXILE

The ancient world gave far less heed to the authorship of books than is our modern custom, and in the ancient world the Orient was much less concerned about authorship than the Occidental world of Greece and Rome, and in the ancient Oriental world the Hebrews were far less interested in the question, "Who wrote it?" than any other people. The literature of Israel, which has come down to us in Holy Writ, has more anonymous works of high quality and import than any other people produced. The Hebrews were concerned about the message of the book, about its teaching and its value for men, and seem not to have troubled themselves about who wrote it. In later days when the books were all written, and the two Hebrew kingdoms had long ceased to exist, the rabbis disputed about authors, and sometimes made ascriptions of authorship that are no less than laughable for their ineptitude. Having no real knowledge they made fantastic guesses and let it go at that. In Chapter VII we have already had litle hints about how the splendid book of Isaiah

grew to its present size and content. We took note that Isaiah had preached and had written down some of his messages, that he had pupils to whom he gave instruction, which they in turn must have given to those who would hear, and speaking after his manner and more or less in his spirit must often have seemed to be speaking to his person. So the Isaiah tradition was carried onward, and long after Isaiah's death, it might very appropriately have been said, "He being dead yet speaketh." Under such influences as these, when holy men reverently gathered Israel's priceless literature, they grouped together into one book a series of messages which seemed to them to be like Isaiah in form or content or further extensions of his teaching, or later echoes of his great and shining words. Thus was formed the book of Isaiah, not one man's book, but the book of several men living at different times, all of them enjoying the inspiration of the Most High, and each serving some purpose in the onward movement of the Kingdom of God. Well may we give thanks that this has so happened, for if some of these little books, for such they were, had not peacefully snuggled in by Isaiah's side into his book they might have been altogether lost, and that would have been a tragedy. The greatest of these additions to Isaiah's book is to be found in chapters 40-55, and they are frequently called "The Book of the Second

Isaiah," or the "Deutero-Isaiah," which means the same thing; or sometimes simply the "Book of Consolation." But the name that I prefer above all others for this little book or for its author is "The Evangelist of the Old Testament."

The Times. This was an unnamed man, for we know not his name, nor are ever likely to know it in this life, but must leave it unknown until all the secrets—and this among them—are revealed in the larger life beyond the grave. But we know his times and are able imaginatively to restore them. He lived during the Exile and in the land of Babylonia. He wrote these chapters between the years 549 and 538 B. C. There is a great kingly figure in this little book, whose name is Cyrus, and this is the way the Evangelist speaks of him: "I have raised up one from the north, and he is come; from the rising of the sun one that calleth upon my name: and he shall come upon rulers as upon mortar, and as the potter treadeth clay" (Isa. 41. 25). That refers to Cyrus, and in the year 549 he had united Persia to the north and Media to the east of Babylon. That was enough to cause the prophet thus to speak of him, so the book was not written before the year 549. But we know it was completed before the year 538, for just listen to this saying, "Assemble yourselves, all ye, and hear; who among them hath declared these things? Jehovah

hath loved him: he shall perform his pleasure on Babylon, and his arm shall be on the Chaldeans" (Isa. 48. 14). This also refers to Cyrus, and it is a prediction that he will take the city of Babylon. He has not yet done it, when the prophet is writing, but he will do it. Now this was actually accomplished by Cyrus in the year 538. We are therefore abundantly justified in saying that the Evangelist of the Old Testament wrote this little book, now called Isaiah 40-55, in the years 549-538 B. C. Let us remind ourselves of the state of affairs which then existed and see what need there was for such a writing as this. We must remember that Nebuchadrezzar carried away eight thousand inhabitants of Jerusalem in the year 597 B. C., among them the prophet Ezekiel, and that in 586 B. C. he destroyed the city, and carried off many more of its inhabitants to be settled as exiles in a strange land. As we have already seen elsewhere, many of these prospered and were happy in their new surroundings as Jeremiah had advised in a very wonderful letter (Jer. 29). Others of them uttered wild cries of agony over their sad fate (see Psalm 137) and were deeply embittered against their captors. Still others accepted the situation as a God-given discipline and hoped that it would some day end and they go back home to begin again the old religious life when God's anger was appeased, and the tribulation was

overpast. But as the years went by this latter attitude became ever harder, and the long deferred hope made sickened hearts. By the time that the year 549 had rolled around they who were carried off in the year 586 had felt no less than thirty-seven years of exile, and that is a large part of a man's life. Many who had been taken away in middle life were dead, and their dust was sleeping in a strange land, while they who yet survived had become old, and found hope dragging heavily and a sore pull upon the heartstrings. Faith was tested and must in some cases have broken down altogether, while their hearts said that God had forsaken his people, nor would he ever remember them again. Men who were in that unhappy state needed comfort from God or man, and lo! here it is just as God sent it by man to them.

The Book of Consolation. The book of consolation is readily divisible into two portions, 40-48 and 49-55. It begins with a passage of such moving beauty, of such eloquence, of such glowing magic in words, that one stands awestricken at its melody. Few passages of Holy Scripture have been so honored among men of later days. Handel has wedded to them strains of music of almost unearthly beauty, and many who have seldom read them have heard them pealed out from a great organ or winged upon the magic of the human voice. The

first words, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people," have been characterized by Sir George Adam Smith in words fit to accompany them when he says, "It would be difficult to find in any language lips that first more softly woo the heart and then take to themselves so brave a trumpet of challenge and assurance. The opening is upon a few short pulses of music, which steal from heaven as gently as the first ripples of light in a cloudless dawn—

> Nahamu, nahamu ammi:
> *Comfort ye, comfort ye my people*
> Dabberu 'al-lev Yerushalaim
> *Speak upon the heart of Jerusalem.*

But then the trumpet-tone breaks forth, 'Call unto her;' and on that high key the music stays, sweeping with the second voice across hill and dale like a company of swift horsemen." These first words of introduction carry on to the end of verse 11, and form a sort of prologue to the whole book. Everybody knows them, every minister of the gospel reads them to his people perhaps as frequently as anything else in the whole Old Testament, and if we could somehow pass over and forget the long roll of the centuries since that day and catch the prophet's first tone, and the rapture of his words, and the melody of his voice we should be prepared to follow on and see the development of his mission to the disheartened exiles. As we go on with this

study of the prophet's magical words, let us keep in mind that Jerusalem does not mean the city of Jerusalem, for that had been destroyed, but rather is an ideal representation of the people. In quite the same way Zion does not mean the city or any part of the city, but rather the people again, and that the oft-recurring phrase "Servant of the Lord" has also a representative meaning, and just what that means we must very closely and very carefully inquire, and to that we shall shortly come, but before we reach it let us take a fugitive glance at the rest of this noble fortieth chapter. After the introduction, which ends in verse 11, the prophet turns to give an answer to all who doubt now or ever have doubted that God would rescue his people from their exile. How does he do it? He does not storm and rage and fume and argue and insist. He just holds up before them and, if I may so express it, just bids them to look at him. Now there is a great wisdom in this. "The doubts and troubles of men always vanish when they really see God. The prophet knows this, and proceeds to describe the immeasurable greatness of God (verses 12-17) in a passage in which the argument from Creation is handled with a boldness of conception and freedom of imagination to which there is nothing equal in the earlier literature" (Skinner). From this the next step is to contrast with this incomparable

God the littleness and pettiness of idols which men make and call gods (verses 18-20), and when this is passed over the thought of the greatness of God is resumed and continued (verses 21-26) until the prophet is ready to draw his conclusion and drive the message home to the mind and heart of his fellow exiles (verses 27-31), and the point he is making is that they need have no fear but rather every confidence that God knows of them, and has not forgotten them. This is the way he says it (I have altered and paraphrased a bit to bring out in English the meaning of the nervous Hebrew sentences):

Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel,
My lot [or fate] is hid from the Lord,
And my right passes from my God [or escapes God's notice]?
Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard,
That an everlasting God is Jehovah, the Lord,
The Creator of the ends of the earth.
He fainteth not, nor is weary.
There is no searching of his understanding.
He giveth power to the faint;
And to them that have no might he increases strength.
And though youths faint and are weary,
And young men stumble;
They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength;
They shall put forth wings like (those) of eagles;
They shall run, and not be weary;
They shall walk, and not faint.

Glorious indeed, and very wonderful, is the whole passage, and still filled with comfort and encouragement for those who are weary and disturbed with doubt, and threatened with difficulty. And now having come thus far in our little study of the prophet we reach the place where there begins a series of passages in which appears the Servant of the Lord, passages quite commonly called the Servant passages. These passages are the following: 41. 8-10; 42. 1-4; 49. 1-6; 50. 4-9; 52. 13 to 53. 12. Let us give them such attention as our time and opportunity may permit.

The Servant Passages. 1. Isa. 41. 8-10. There can be no doubt who is meant by the Servant of the Lord in this passage.

> But thou, Israel, art my servant,
> Jacob whom I have chosen,
> The seed of Abraham my friend,
> Thou whom I have taken hold of from the ends of the earth,
> And called thee from the corners thereof,
> And said unto thee, Thou art my servant,
> I have chosen thee and not rejected thee;
> Fear thou not, for I am with thee;
> Be not dismayed; for I am thy God;
> I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee;
> Yea, I will uphold thee with my righteous right hand.

The Servant of the Lord who is here meant is quite clearly the Israel, the Israel which God chose

in Abraham, who was God's worshiper and is now in exile.

2. Isa. 42. 1-4. Let us now see who is meant in this passage.

> Behold, my servant, whom I uphold;
> My chosen, in whom my soul delighteth:
> I have put my spirit upon him;
> He shall send forth judgment to the nations.
> He shall not cry, nor lift up his voice,
> Nor cause it to be heard in the street.
> A bruised reed shall he not break,
> And the dimly burning wick shall he not quench:
> He will bring forth judgment in truth.
> He shall not fail nor be discouraged,
> Till he have set judgment in the earth;
> And the isles shall wait for his instruction.

That is a very fine passage. To whom does it refer? Is it the same as in No. 1? Certainly not. This is not the real Israel in bondage and accomplishing nothing for the world. It is the Ideal Israel which Jehovah is fashioning to give judgment, that is, the true religion of God to mankind. And he is to be so unobtrusive in all his work, so quiet, this Ideal Israel which the prophet has imagined and so beautifully described. Now turn and read the very remarkable application made of this passage in Matt. 12. 17 ff.

3. Isa. 49. 1-6. In this passage the Servant of the Lord is represented as speaking; he is "dramatically introduced, addressing distant nations."

Listen, O isles, unto me;
And hearken ye peoples from afar:
The Lord hath called me from the womb;
From the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name.
And he hath made my mouth a sharp sword,
In the shadow of his hand hath he hid me,
And made me a polished arrow;
In his quiver hath he hid me;
And said unto me, Thou art my servant,
O Israel, in whom I will be glorified.
But I said I have labored in vain,
I have spent my strength for naught and vanity;
Yet surely my judgment is with the Lord,
And my work with my God.
And now, saith the Lord that formed me from the womb to be his servant,
To bring Jacob again to him,
Though Israel be not gathered,
Yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord,
And my God shall be my strength.
And he said, It is too light a thing that thou shouldst be my servant
To raise up the tribes of Jacob,
And to restore the preserved of Israel:
I will also give thee to be a light to the Gentiles,
That thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.

The meaning of this passage is that the Ideal Israel is set over against the actual Israel, and is the means by which the actual Israel is to be brought back to Palestine. This would be a great work indeed, but the prophet conceives a greater, for to the Servant is reserved the high privilege of bring-

ing the knowledge of God to the other nations also, even to the ends of the earth. For such a world-wide mission the religion of Judaism was not adapted, for with its limitation of sacrifices to one sanctuary at Jerusalem it was impossible for it to become a universal religion. "But it was possible for the religion of Israel in its essential features, when its temporary elements had been stripped off, and it had been transformed and spiritualized, and thus adapted to new conditions and a larger sphere. This transformation and adaptation to new and larger surroundings was, of course, accomplished by Christianity: the Ideal Israel, who fulfilled this part of the prophet's picture, was our Lord Jesus Christ, whose first agents in carrying out this great work were His apostles, especially St Paul" (Driver).

4. Isa. 50. 4-9. The word servant does not appear in this passage, but there can be no doubt that the speaker is the servant, and here he is for the first time introduced as a sufferer. The passage runs as follows:

> The Lord God hath given me
> The tongue of those that are taught,
> That I may know how to raise up with words, him that is weary;
> He wakeneth by morning,
> He wakeneth mine ear
> To hear as they that are taught.

The Lord God hath opened mine ear,
And I was not rebellious,
Neither turned away backward.
I gave my back to the smiters,
And my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair:
I hid not my face from shame and spitting.
The Lord God will help me;
Therefore I shall not be confounded:
Therefore have I set my face like a flint,
And I know that I shall not be ashamed.
He is near that justifies me;
Who will contend with me? let us stand up together:
Who is mine adversary? let him come near to me.
Behold, the Lord God will help me;
Who is he that shall condemn me?
Behold, they all shall fall to pieces like a garment;
The moth shall eat them up.

In its form this servant passage approximates most closely the third (49. 1-6), but its closest ties otherwise are with the fifth. It is indeed a sort of bridge between the third and the fifth. In this fourth we meet for the first time the servant as suffering, suffering at the hands of men, and suffering because of his fidelity to his mission. In the fifth the servant suffers, and the portrayal is much more intense and he suffers now not only at the hands of men, but also at the hands of God, and his sufferings are more plainly vicarious. They are viewed religiously and not so much personally, and the great point is that they are efficacious for the salvation of men.

5. Isa. 52. 13 to 53. 12. Here the climax is reached. The prophet passes now in words vibrant in tone, rich in color, moving in pathos, exalted in diction, from the Idealized Israel to the Idealized Person. Let me translate the passage anew for you, out of its dear old Hebrew words into our own tongue, wherein we were born, and in which our mothers have spoken to us. There is no modern language better fitted for this task.

Behold, my servant shall prosper,
He shall rise, be exalted, be exceeding high.
Like as many were appalled at thee
(So marred from a man's was his visage
And his form from the sons of men),
So shall he startle many nations;
Kings shall shut their mouths before him:
For that which had never been told them shall they see,
And that which they had not heard shall they perceive.
Who hath believed that which we have heard?
And to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?
For he grew up like a sapling before him,
And as a root out of the dry ground;
He had no form nor beauty that we should regard him,
Nor aspect that we should desire him.
He was despised, and forsaken of men;
A man of pains and familiar with sicknesses,
And as one from whom men hide their face,
Despised and we esteemed him not.
Surely our sicknesses he bore,
And our pains he loaded himself with them;
Whereas we accounted him stricken,
Smitten of God and afflicted.

But he was wounded for our transgressions,
He was crushed for our iniquities:
The chastisement of our welfare was upon him,
And with his stripes we are healed.
All we like sheep have gone astray;
We have turned every one to his own way,
And the Lord hath made to light on him
The iniquity of us all.
He was oppressed, though he humbled himself
And opened not his mouth;
As a lamb that is led to the slaughter,
And as a sheep that before the sheerers is dumb;
Yea, he opened not his mouth.
By oppression and judgment he was taken away;
And of his generation who reflected
That he was cut off from the land of the living?
That for the transgressions of my people he was stricken.
And they made his grave with the wicked,
And with the rich his tomb;
Although he had done no violence,
Neither was any deceit in his mouth.
Yet it pleased the Lord to crush him by disease;
To see if he were to make himself an offering for guilt,
That he might see his seed, prolong his days,
And the pleasure of the Lord would prosper in his hand.
Of the travail of his soul he shall see to the full:
By his knowledge will my servant bring righteousness to many,
And their iniquities will he bear.
Therefore shall I divide him a portion with the great,
And he shall divide the spoil with the strong;
Because he poured out his soul unto death,
And was numbered with the transgressors;
Yet he bore the sin of many,
And made intercession for the transgressors.

There, I have tried to do it so that the current would be clear and the course straight and the meaning in general fairly easy to grasp.

Here in this passage the doctrine of the Servant of the Lord reaches its climax. The Idealized Israel has become a Person. Of whom did the prophet speak? He spoke of a great and wonderful ideal Person who would some day suffer vicariously, and then waited, I suppose, in a sort of trance of eagerness to see who might appear who could meet the conditions of a picture so awe inspiring, so astounding in every lineament. But centuries rolled by, and there was none to be found, until He came, even the Lord of Life and Truth, Jesus the Christ, and lo! he was more wonderful by far than the imaginary picture which the Great Evangelist of the Old Testament had painted!

Suggestions for Study

Prophecy and the Prophets, by Frederick Carl Eiselen, pp. 241 ff. *The Religious Ideas of the Old Testament,* by H. Wheeler Robinson (see index). *The Exile's Book of Consolation,* By E. König, translated by Rev. J. A. Selbie. For a commentary on all of the Second Isaiah see "The Book of the Prophet Isaiah," by J. Skinner (*Cambridge Bible for Schools*).

CHAPTER XI

NEHEMIAH, THE BUILDER

We have been reading the words and studying the lives of prophets, and it was indeed well worth while, for the prophets are they to whose great guild our Lord belonged far more than to any other branch of the revelations of God. We have read many wonderful words, and the magic of their influence ought never to pass from us. It is, however, well to remember that there were different classes of religious teachers in Israel; there were indeed three great classes, priests, prophets, and wise men. To the priests we owe the great value of the law, to the prophets are due the prophetical books from Isaiah to Malachi, and to the wise men we owe Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Job. It were well worth our while if it were possible in this little book to study a bit more the works of the wise men, but the limits of space and the main purpose of the book prevent this. It is, however, well that we see, before the book ends, something of a great man of affairs, an administrator, a doer of great deeds, and for this purpose we are now to see the fine, manly figure

of Nehemiah. But to understand him we must relate him to his times.

The Sufferings of the Fathers. We must remind ourselves that in 597 B. C. Nebuchadrezzar carried off part of the population of Jerusalem into captivity in Babylonia, among them the man who was called to be a prophet in 593 or 592, whose name is Ezekiel. Then in 586 Jerusalem was destroyed and a larger body of the people went away into exile. To those who thereafter lived in Babylonia Ezekiel became a watchman, and the great prophet of Isa. 40-55, the Evangelist of the Old Testament, became prophet and comforter and his words of power we have just been reading. He knew that the Jews were in God's own time to be brought out of Babylonia and restored to their own land. The time for the fulfillment of this great dream of his arrived when Cyrus had made a mighty empire by adding Babylon in the year 538 to his previously conquered lands of Media and Persia. In the year 537 Cyrus issued a decree permitting all Jews who wished to do so to leave Babylonia and return to the land of their fathers. Let us not forget that these people consisted of three quite distinct classes. (a) Some had been carried away in 597. They had now been fifty-nine or sixty years in Babylonia, and all of them were now old—even those who were boys of ten or twelve

years old were about seventy years old or above it. Some of them would be too old to travel, face hardships and make homes in or about Jerusalem of which their memories would be shadowy enough. (b) Some others were carried into Babylonia in 586 and they had been there for forty-eight or forty-nine years, and in that time had made homes, earned a livelihood, learned the language, and were really Babylonians in many respects, and some even forsook their religious faith and adopted the Babylonian. (c) There was still another class, and a large one, composed of those who were born of Jewish parents, indeed, but born in the land of the captivity. When the royal decree was issued, a very serious question arose as to who would accept the opportunity and return, and who would refuse. It seems a pretty safe guess that few of the first class would make the long, hard journey, and perhaps not many of the third class. This would leave those who returned to be chiefly of the second class. However that may be, it is an indisputable fact that the number who did return was small when compared with the hope that all Jehovah's people might be eager to return to the land that God had promised their fathers, and given to them, and then had consecrated it with noble, beautiful and useful lives of priests, prophets, wise men and kings. But so it did not come to pass, and they who did return had a hard struggle for a

long time. The lands which they or their fathers had owned had long since passed into other hands and they must buy new property out of whatever means they had secured in Babylonia, or set themselves with the proverbial diligence of their race to make such a livelihood as was possible. The people who had been left behind when Nebuchadrezzar carried off the captivity had made no attempt to restore the temple, to rebuild the city walls, or to reconstruct the city on any large scale. To the eyes of those who returned with high hopes and glowing enthusiasm the city of their dreams must have presented a sorry sight. What could they do? The answer that they returned was that they must first provide housing for their families, and an ordered economic life. After that other things might be attempted.

The Question of the Temple. Whether they all knew it or not, the gravest question before them was the question of what should and could be done about the Temple. There lay its blackened ruins as Nebuchadrezzar had left them, and no man had dared for fifty years to make the great attempt to rebuild them. One might have thought that as soon as the returned exiles had found even a temporary foothold in the land they would at once have begun to prepare for the rebuilding. They did not do this, and though they did not realize it,

in all probability they were thus putting into jeopardy the further existence of their religion. It is fully established by experience that no religion can exist and propagate its faith without an abiding place, a temple or synagogue or church. In the reluctance or inability of these people to rebuild the Temple there was a real tragedy for that day and also for this day in which we live. To get them to undertake their duty the prophet Haggai delivered to them between September, 520 B. C., and January of the next year four earnest little discourses pointing out their duty and urging them to do it. That little book of his cannot compare with the great prophets in beauty or dignity or richness, and he must have been a man of very ordinary ability. He has only one message: "Build that Temple," and that was sufficient. Sixteen years had elapsed since their return, and the year 520 had come, and Haggai had moved them to do their duty, and in four years more the Second Temple was finished. It was not so large, nor so imposing as that which Solomon had built, but it saved the Faith.

In Babylonia. We have been trying to observe the labors and burdens, the trials and triumphs of the people who had returned from Babylonia to the homeland. Let us now turn to secure a picture of the historical and political movements in Babylonia, and first of all let us see who were the Persian

kings who were then ruling not only in Persia but all Babylonia and Palestine as well.

Cyrus, 558-528 B. C.
Cambyses, 528-521.
Smerdis, 521.
Darius I (Hystaspis), 521-485.
Xerxes I, 485-465.
Artaxerxes I (Longimanus), 465-425.

There were the kings who ruled over the Jews who had returned and in like manner ruled also over the Jews who still remained in Babylonia. It was Cyrus who had permitted the return, and it was in the reign of Darius that Haggai, with some help from Zechariah, persuaded the people to rebuild the Temple between 520 and 516. Darius was a great king, and his reign was long, and much did he do for the organization of this great empire. His military efforts fell out otherwise. The Greek cities in Asia Minor had given Darius much trouble in the period of governmental organization, for they knew the sweets of liberty and were determined not to be dominated by any Persian military authority. In 492 Darius sent an army into the Hellenic peninsula and a fleet to the Peloponnesus, both of which were repulsed. In 490 he made another attempt, but his army met defeat at Marathon at the hands of the Greeks under Miltiades. Undeterred, he planned a third campaign, but died before it

could be carried out, leaving to his son Xerxes the purpose to crush the Greeks. He raised a great army and put upon the waters a fleet of many ships. At Salamis, in 480, he witnessed a terrible defeat, which was followed by another at Plataea in the next year. So ended Persian designs on democracy. I have mentioned these Persian wars in order to link the history now before us, which deals with the Jews through whom came our religion, with the history of the Greeks, from whom our civilization derives. But it is time to draw nearer to Nehemiah.

The Sources. Our knowledge of Nehemiah and his times, with Ezra, whose name is imperishably linked with his, comes from the two books which bear their honored names. These two books were originally one and formed a part of the books of Chronicles and bear the stamp of the Chronicler's methods of writing history. He wrote about 300 B. C., and therefore about 150 years after the events which are now before us. He has, however, preserved for us some chapters of fascinating interest, and of the highest historical value. He had before him, as he wrote his big book, some memoirs written by the two great men Ezra and Nehemiah. He did not work these over into his own style, but copied them out into his book just as the authors had originally written them. Thus, for example, if you

will turn to Ezra 7. 27 to 9. 15 you will read a long excerpt written originally by Ezra himself. Then if you will look at the book of Nehemiah and read Neh. 1. 1 to 7. 73 and 12. 27-43 and 13. 1-31 you will be reading the very words of Nehemiah as he wrote them in his own Memoirs. Let me say with great emphasis and conviction that this is a wonderful thing which is thus before you. You are studying the lives of men who lived twenty-three hundred years ago. It is a very remarkable case of literary preservation. We do not half appreciate it. Think what Greek scholars would be saying if they possessed portions of original memoirs of Miltiades and Themistocles. We are seeking knowledge of Nehemiah. If we were to study these original sources and gather up every other fragment that remains we should soon get an idea of the man and of his work, and this is now our duty, but first about the situation which made an imperative call for just such a man as Nehemiah proved himself to be.

The Need. The Temple, as we have already seen, was rebuilt in the years 520-516 B. C. That seemed the beginning of a new era of hope and the fruition of many longings seemed at hand, but alas! only to be dashed into fearful disappointment. Zerubbabel died, how we do not certainly know, and Judah fell under the despotic control of a Persian satrap. Such little power over their own affairs

as was left to the Jews came into the hands of the high priest. The book of Malachi presents to us a gloomy picture of the times which followed. There were poor harvests; the poor were oppressed by the rich; the burden of maintaining the priesthood and the orderly forms of religious life became irksome, the injunctions of the law were disobeyed; the sabbath neglected; and the zeal for the maintenance of Israel's separate character broke down through frequent intermarriage with other peoples; and the divorce of Hebrews' wives became common. In response to this general laxity of life and morals there was formed a party of opposition, composed of men who were zealots, men who "feared Jehovah and thought upon his name" (Mal. 3. 16). These men were confident that the only hope for Judaism lay in a rigid adherence to the law of the Lord, and they were engaged in a struggle to bring about conditions suitable for such a rejuvenation of the religious life of the land. Help came to them most providentially and probably quite unexpectedly.

Ezra the Scribe. During the reign of Artaxerxes I, king of Persia, a priest of Jehovah named Ezra, of the Zadokite priesthood, a scribe learned in the law of Moses, received permission of the king to visit his fellow countrymen in Judah. The king issued a decree extraordinary in its scope and most generous in its provisions, and with a caravan of

nearly sixteen hundred men the long journey was made safely, and Ezra entered the holy city in the month of August, 458 B. C. He brought with him rich gifts, but the greatest possession by far was the precious Book of the Law. This was the five books of the Law, known now to us under the names of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. They contain the ancient laws of God, some of them going back to the days of Moses, with such additions as time, circumstance and providence had brought about. These books had been carefully gathered together, the laws codified and arranged, the traditions collated and written out, and the whole put together during the exile in Babylonia, and Ezra was now taking the completed whole to Jerusalem to offer it to the people as God's law by them to be received and obeyed. This was substantially our Pentateuch, and Ezra was ready to try to enforce it literally as well as spiritually. He had also large powers from the Persian king to enforce both the law of the king and the law of God by the application of penalties, "death, banishment, confiscation of goods or imprisonment" (Ezra 7. 24-26). Ezra's efforts at reform, in spite of his great powers, met with but little success, and apparently his efforts to overcome the marriage with women who were not Jews, and to break up marriages so contracted, led to embitterment and to personal

opposition, so that he was confronted with the probability of a portentous failure. There was great need for another man.

Nehemiah. While these distressful events were going on in Jerusalem there was living far away at the court of the Persian king Artaxerxes I in the city of Susa in Elam a deeply patriotic Jew named Nehemiah, who had risen to the lofty position of cupbearer to the king. Having learned of the sorry state of Jerusalem, and being moved by mingled feelings of pity and of indignation against evil-doers, he besought the king for leave of absence to visit Jerusalem and was appointed by the king as governor of the province of Judea. When he reached Jerusalem in the year 445 or 444 he made a circuit of the ruined city walls by night and gives us a picturesque description of the scene and describes his emotions (Neh. 2. 13 ff.). He determined to rebuild the city walls, and set to work with immense energy. In the short space of fifty-two days he had completed the work and the gates were set up. The account of this great undertaking has always been one of the fascinating stories of Holy Writ, and the figure of Nehemiah standing guard and with sleepless vigilance ready to sound the alarm should enemies approach has long been a delight to youth and age as a fine example of the man of action. There were enemies both within and without the

city, for within were those whom Ezra had alienated by his efforts of rigid legal enforcement, and there must have been pacifists who could not understand why any human effort should be necessary to defend the city. Without the rising walls were Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian, who would do what they could to keep the Jews weak and defenseless that their own nations might pass them in the race of civilization or perhaps overwhelm them and take from them their patrimony.

The Law Published. It seems probable that it was soon after the great festival of the dedication of the walls, which occurred in September, 444, that a far greater event took place. Ezra had been in retirement for about twelve years. He now had the support of the new governor, Nehemiah, and emerging from his hiding place was ready to introduce to the public the book of laws which the people had not yet seen. There was apparently a public demand for a sight and a hearing of it (Neh. 8. 1), and we shall surely not go far wrong if we ascribe this in large measure to Nehemiah's efforts. Then Ezra, standing above the great throng of people in a big public square, began to read, and before him stood men and women, and all that could hear with understanding. Now that is a very interesting statement indeed. One is glad to learn that women

were not excluded from the company, but allowed to add their intelligent appreciation and the melody of their voices to the solemn occasion, and it is also a pleasant thing to think that the youth of the nation, the great hope of the future, the boys and girls who were old enough to comprehend were there as well. So Ezra began to read, and on swept his voice over the multitude, and from time to time he paused while some of his helpers and supporters explained a word, a phrase or a passage. Nay he was sometimes interrupted by cries of fear and pain as the people heard laws read which they well knew they had often broken. But they were speedily reminded that it was a holy day and told to "*mourn not, nor weep*," and Nehemiah added the beautiful words, "the joy of the Lord is your strength." On the following day the reading was continued and they heard the rule and order for the Feast of the Tabernacles, and preparations were made at once for its celebration. The publication of this code of laws wrought a great transformation. It turned the nation into a church. Here begins formal Judaism with the Book of the Law as the basis not only of religious but also of social life.

Nehemiah's Social Legislation. Nehemiah was now faced by serious and pressing social difficulties. The Persian taxation was heavy, and the poor had

been forced to borrow from rich neighbors and mortgage their little all, and in some cases had even sold their children as slaves. Nehemiah was bold enough to meet this issue squarely. He abolished usury, and compelled the rich money lenders to restore property taken in pledge. He set an example of patriotic devotion, for during the twelve years of his administration he did not eat the "*bread of the governor*," which means that he supported his own household from his own private means. We have no means of discovering how fully he succeeded in carrying out his strict methods of rule, but after a time he was compelled to return to Persia. In 433 he was again in Jerusalem, and then he discovered that during his absence some of the old abuses, such as sabbath desecration and the marriage with aliens, had begun again, and so the old work must be resumed. The business of governing is no slight burden whether in ancient or in modern times.

The Character of the Man. This was a great and good man, one of the most engaging personalities in all the history of the Hebrew people. There is, however, no need that we portray him as a faultless, impeccable character, for he had some manifest weaknesses. He was a man of such intense feeling that he passed readily into vehement, almost unbridled severity. This was evidenced in his whole handling of the very difficult marriage question.

Thus, for example, the grandson of the high priest had married the daughter of Sanballat the Samaritan, and the comment which Nehemiah makes is: "I chased him from me" (Neh. 13. 28). That was heroic treatment, but it did no good but much harm, for it helped forward very materially the formation of a new religion in Samaria. With less petulance Nehemiah might have found a better way. This and other faults were after all but spots upon the sun, for his contributions were distinguished. He has himself summarized his services (Neh. 13. 30, 31), and they may be enumerated as, (a) He had helped enormously in the greatly needed task of separating the Jews from idolatrous strangers. (b) He systematized the Temple services; and (c) made provision for priests and Levites that an ordered system might make their support safe. Here, then, were three great contributions to the spiritual and social economy, and the man who so greatly contributed to them had no small cause for self-gratulation, and without improper pride might say, "Remember me, O my God, for good." He does not mention the rebuilding of the city walls, and if that feature of his labors has at times been exaggerated in modern times it is still true that it deserves a place, in our memory, among his good works. Let this stand as our estimate of him which Josephus has expressed in the eulogium: "He was a man of

good and righteous character, and very ambitious to make his own nation happy; and he hath left the walls of Jerusalem as an eternal monument of himself."

Suggestions for Study

The best study of Nehemiah is in the twin books of Ezra and Nehemiah, which deserve more reading than they seem now to receive from most Christian people. The best Commentary is *The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah*, by Herbert E. Ryle (*Cambridge Bible for Schools*).

CHAPTER XII

OLD TESTAMENT LIFE AND LITERATURE

THE literature of the Hebrew people which concerns us particularly at this moment is found in the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament. There is indeed much other Hebrew literature, and its value and importance are not to be underestimated. It has its students, Gentile as well as Jewish, and they have a clear right to magnify their field of study. It would, indeed, be well for our understanding of the New Testament if there were more Christian students of Talmudic and rabbinic literature. But for us, just now, at the end of this little book, Hebrew literature means Old Testament literature. But Old Testament literature is connected most closely with Old Testament life. If one views the Old Testament from one side he will see a series of books bearing unmistakable signs of a great, moving, effectual divine influence, but it is equally true that if he should turn this galaxy of books about and view them from the other side he would see a series of books bearing unmistakable signs of a great and powerful human influence. It has

pleased God to speak to us, and there is no reasonable doubt of the title deeds, and perhaps nobody has ever stated the case better than the great writer who said, "God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in *his Son*" (Heb. 1. 1). There it is, you see, "by divers portions and in divers manners." We have been studying some of these divers portions, and have had an opportunity to regard some of the divers manners, and we have ill used the opportunity if we have not perceived that these prophets who spoke to Israel were each of them himself, and not somebody else, each of them a man and not a mannikin, each of them influenced, used, helped, inspired by God, but each still living in his own proper person among the people of Israel. To put the matter in another way, it might be said that God had revealed himself in the lives of these great men. He had not sent his word by angels or spirits, but by men, and it is very profitable to consider the lives of these men, and see how human they were and what of value their lives might be to us in our living. Out of their lives, as well as out of the workings of the Divine Spirit within them, came the literature which is ours in the Old Testament. It is quite impossible to divorce the literature from the life, and it were

a foolish deed if it were possible. And now if we, instead of these few great characters, had before us the whole life of the Hebrew people, and were able fully to grasp it and see it whole, and see it truly, we should see that the life of the nation and its literature were intimately related, and that the right way to study them both would be to study them together. That would, however, be too large a task for the little book that may now crave the reader's indulgence for but a short time. In lieu of this our more modest task must be to see in an outline way the development of Israel's literature, and to that we are now to turn.

The Beginnings in Song. The literatures of the peoples of which we know most all begin with poetry and not with prose. There is a strong presumption that this was also true of the Hebrew people and the supposition receives much confirmation from the presence in the Scriptures of numerous poetic fragments and of some fully developed songs. We shall not probably go astray if we suppose that the Song of Lamech (Gen. 4. 23 f.) is much older than the book in which it is now found quoted. It may indeed not even be Hebrew at all originally, but Midianite or Kenite. The Noah poems, or prophecies, as we usually call them, concerning Shem, Japhet, and Canaan (Gen. 9. 25-27) are probably very ancient poetic pieces. The Song of

the Well (Num. 21. 17 f.) carries us back to the dry lands and the distant days when the water in a well was so precious as to be saluted with a burst of joyous song. The overthrow of King Sihon is celebrated in song (Num. 21. 27-29), and must have floated about, passing from man to man, from tongue to ear, until at last the writer of the history seized it and put it into the book where now it stands. The splendid song of Moses (Exod. 15. 1-18) goes back in its origins to that very day, though, like all ballads of earlier days, it has been changed, edited we call it, to fit later conditions. But there are proofs enough of its antiquity, for Jehovah is a man of war (verse 3), he is a king (verse 18), and is compared with other gods (verse 11). When our survey reaches the period of the Judges we read the Song of Deborah (Judg. 5), one of the noblest and most thrilling ballads of all time. I have mentioned but a few of the songs, or ballads or poetic fragments which are now imbedded in the Pentateuch or in other of the early books. There they are, shining like jewels in a sober prose setting, and there are literally scores of them. But where there are scores now hundreds must have perished, having served their turn and done their little duty of helping to preserve the memory of the great deeds of the fathers. When writers began to write they found these songs all

ready for use. Some they quoted, others must have been used as the sources of their knowledge of the deeds of the fathers, and the material which they supplied worked over into prose.

The Beginnings of Law. As the early beginnings of many a prose story may be supposed to have been in songs or ballads or poetical narratives, so also the beginnings of the elaborate law codes of Exodus and of Leviticus may be supposed to have been in separate laws, or in little codes of laws, and most fortunately two of the most ancient of these have been preserved. The most venerated is, of course, the Decalogue—the Ten Commandments—to which allusion has already been made in the story of Moses. The other is the most precious little code called the Book of the Covenant (Exod. 20. 23 to 23. 19), which certainly contains materials much older than the days of Moses, and has certain little vague parallels with the law code of the great king of Babylonia, Hammurapi, who reigned 2130-2087 B. C., hundreds of years before Moses. From these as examples we may surmise that when Moses began the great task he found both customs and laws already in existence, some the result of the experience of Israel, and others taken over from the Semitic world by which they were surrounded and to which they were related by ties of blood.

Bits of Early Prose. As there were songs be-

fore the Pentateuch was written and laws before it was composed, so there were evidently little pieces of prose before the connected narratives. Thus we have a list of names of the Edomite kings which extends down to the days of David (Gen. 36. 31-39), which was in existence before the book of Genesis was composed, and in the list of Clan-leaders (Num. 1. 4 ff.; 7. 12 ff.) there are a few names in strange forms which, though surrounded now by later names, may well be from early lists. If there were any lists of names there may well have been others, and with these, or apart from them, narratives handed down by word of mouth, or even in written form.

The Days of David and Solomon. We have been talking together of very ancient times and trying to see how literature began among the Hebrews with poetical materials and legal materials and little scraps of names of kings with here and there perhaps a hint of their doings, as we know to have been the case in Babylonia. When we come to David's day there begins a new and larger literary life. David wrote a splendid lamentation over Saul and Jonathan, and though subject to the usual dangers of editing and transmission, we can get an idea of its early form in its present condition (2 Sam. 1. 17-27). A much longer composition of his appears later (2 Sam. 22. 1-51),

and this we know has met with many vicissitudes and has suffered much, for it has been preserved elsewhere (Psa. 18) with many variations. These two poems suggest, of course, that David may very well have written religious poems, as tradition is quite certain that he did. In the Psalter there are one hundred and fifty Psalms, and of these a hundred have some ascription of authorship and fifty are entirely anonymous. If we study very carefully the contents of the seventy-three which are ascribed to David in our present Psalter a conviction is surely produced that some of the seventy-three could not have been written by him, and that others may not have been, and the next step would be that perhaps none were. The position which seems to me wise and prudent and well based is already set down in this book, and there you would do well to read it, and save the need of further discussion here. During the reign of Solomon there was quite probably considerable literary activity. A portion of the book of Proverbs is ascribed to the authorship of Solomon himself, though it is most instructive to see how much is specifically accredited to later times. The book of Proverbs is a composite work. Many men of many minds worked upon it, and its sparks of wit and wisdom have been struck from many anvils. Solomon lived about 950 B. C., and in Proverbs (25. 1) we may read

this statement: "These also are proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah, king of Judah, copied out." Hezekiah lived about 710 B. C., so it was more than two hundred years after the days of Solomon that these proverbs, which are ascribed to him, are finally edited. The book of Proverbs also contains proverbs written not by Hebrews but by Ishmaelites of the tribe of Massa (30. 1 ff.) and it concludes with a poem which is not a proverb at all, but a very beautiful tribute to a good woman, and placed where it now is in honor of the mother of King Lemuel (31. 1). If now the book of Proverbs is so obviously a composite book, slowly growing through a long period, we need feel no surprise if we come to learn that other biblical books are also composite. That conclusion will not make them any the less valuable, or any the less inspired. In this same period of David and Solomon the beginnings of the Books of Samuel were written. There in 1 Sam. 1 to 2 Sam. 8 are to be found the earliest strata of the writings in the book as it now exists, but the most precious piece in the book is the section 2 Sam. 9-20, with 1 Kings 1. The man who wrote those chapters was certainly living at the very time of the events, as Driver has well said: "The abundance and particularity of detail show that the narrative must date from a period very little later than that of the events related,

The style is singularly bright, flowing and picturesque," and Eduard Meyer, the German historian of the ancient Orient, has added to this estimate the striking statement: "It is astonishing that historical literature of this character should have been possible in Israel at this time. It stands far above everything which we know elsewhere of ancient Oriental historical writing."

The Pentateuch. We have already seen how materials for the writing of the earlier events of Israel's history lay ready in hand in songs, laws and bits of prose. It was, therefore, quite natural that when such historical narratives as those preserved in the books of Samuel were in existence men should turn their attention to gathering the stories of the fathers, and putting them in order. The first attempt to do this was made about 850 B. C. and in Judah. There a writer whom we now call the Judaistic or the Jahvistic writer, or for convenience simply by the initial letter J, wrote a beautiful and interesting book, beginning with a story of the creation, for which ancient Oriental materials existed, and continuing on with most lovable old stories of the patriarchs, and on through the Egyptian sojourn and the work of Moses. Then about the year 800 B. C. a writer in northern Israel, whom we call the Ephraimistic or Elohistic writer, or simply E, wrote the story, the fascinating story, over

again from the materials accessible to him, and in a somewhat different way from the earlier book. The Judean writer uses Jehovah (Yahweh), but the Ephraimistic writer uses Elohim (God) instead. Later these two works were combined into a unity which we call JE. This was then the real beginning of the Pentateuch, yet there was a need of much more. In the year 621 B. C. a "book of the law" was found in the Temple, and as a consequence a great religious reformation began (2 Kings 22, 23) the details of which are precisely those which are especially enjoined in Deuteronomy. The inference naturally to be drawn is that the book found was Deuteronomy and certainly not the whole Pentateuch. It seems on several grounds probable that it was not quite the whole of Deuteronomy as we now have it, but more likely chapters 5 to 26, or 12 to 26, approximately and chapter 28. During the exile there was a period of literary activity as we have seen when we were studying the lives of Ezra and Nehemiah, and then the wise and the learned made extensive collections of legal as well as historical material about the year 500 B. C., and so formed a book which we call the Priest Codex, or simply P. When JE and D and P were united and read to the people by Ezra, the Pentateuch substantially as it now exists was formed. If we think of the Pentateuch as one great unified book, and remember

the influence which it exerted upon Judaism, and then upon Mohammedanism and upon Christianity, we shall be perfectly safe in saying that this was the greatest book ever written. Our fathers used to think that Moses wrote the whole book. It now appears that God used many other of his servants in the making of this book. It began indeed with Moses, but it was not finished for a period that moves upward toward the mark of a millennium. It matters little, for, "forget not this one thing, beloved, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (2 Pet. 3. 8).

The Prophets. Elijah and Elisha wrote no books, so far as we know. But about the year 760 B. C. Amos preached in Bethel, and wrote down so much of his preaching as could be remembered or was likely to be useful to the people for whom it was intended. With him began literary prophecy, though the life and color of it were still sounding from the spoken word. Following closely upon Amos came Hosea, who preached God's love in the northern kingdom as Amos had his righteousness. In the southern kingdom came the great voice of Isaiah of Jerusalem and his younger contemporary Micah. When these two voices were hushed there seemed to be a lull, and it is some time before the air feels again the prophet's urgent call, his warn-

ing or his winsome tones. Then the silence is broken by Zephaniah, and shortly after by the thunderous tones of Jeremiah, and by his lesser contemporary Habakkuk. In the Exile Ezekiel speaks out boldly and then dreams of a great religious future for his people, and utters lofty plans for their religious life. After the return from captivity, which took place in 536, sixteen years elapse before Haggai preaches his earnest sermons to induce the people to rebuild the Temple, and has the help of Zechariah in the same enterprise. About the year 450 Malachi speaks out against carelessness and indifference, and the little book of Joel belongs also in the post-exilic period, though the exact time is uncertain, and the book of Jonah, one of the noblest, richest, and most moving of these little books, was written quite probably somewhere after 450 B. C., and perhaps even as late as 250 B. C. "The author stands beyond question among the greatest of the prophets, by the side of Jeremiah and the Second Isaiah. That out of the stony heart of Judaism such a book should come is nothing less than a marvel of divine grace" (Peake).

The Wisdom Books. When we were passing over the literary efforts of the period of David and Solomon attention was called to the beginnings of the proverbial literature and to the growth of the book by accretions in later days. The book began a

literature in Israel quite distinct from the prophetic, the literature of wisdom, the work of the wise men, a class to make the third in the company of priests, prophets and wise men. They taught the ways of God to men not by sacrifices as did the priests, nor by the word ("Thus saith the Lord") as the prophets, but by counsel, by words of wisdom, and the whole range of life was theirs to urge frugality, industry, caution, and every other of the minor as well as the major virtues, to win the listless, the lazy, and perhaps above all the skeptic, the doubter of God's ways with man. To this class of literature belongs the book of Ecclesiastes, with its strangely mingled expression and exaltation over which scholars still puzzle and suggest solutions, but a book of many and very great beauties, and full of instruction still for those who can seek and find it. The book is late in its origin, belonging either to the Persian or the Greek period, and was very late in securing admission to the Canon. The crowning book of the wisdom literature is the glorious, the incomparable book of Job, highest flower of the poetic genius of the whole Oriental world. A book indeed for the philosopher, the poet, the lover of the music of words, the dreamer, the skeptic. It was written perhaps about 400 B. C., but it may be considerably later.

The Priestly Story. The books of Joshua,

Judges, Samuel, and Kings were called by the Hebrews the Former Prophets, and admirably descriptive was the name, for these books tell the story from the point of view of the prophets. In the same way the story of Israel has been told by the priests in the books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Chronicles and finished about the year 300 B. C. It is surely a very remarkable gift to possess two such groups of books. The ways of God are very wonderful, with many sides, and many sided are the minds of men. The prophets saw one side and the priests another. It is well. The world is big enough for both groups of men still to live in it, and each to approach God in his own way, and understand his ways in his own way.

An Apocalypse. Slipped in among the books in the Hebrew Bible away back in the third group, among the writings is the book of Daniel. It is not among the prophetic books, and it should never be called a prophetic book. It is an apocalyptic book. Let us see what that means. The word mean an "unveiling" or a "disclosure." An apocalyptic book sets out to reveal that which cannot be known to ordinary mortals. It does not concern itself so much with this present world, but opens to wondering eyes the distant future, the heavenly mysteries, the catastrophic "day of the Lord." The prophets were busy with their own days, as we have

seen in the case of Amos, Isaiah, and Jeremiah. The Apocalyptist cares far less for his own time; his eyes are for the final Divine Event. There, that describes the book of Daniel. It was written between 167 and 165 B. C. And far away at the end of the New Testament is another apocalyptic book, the book of Revelation.

And now have we not reached the end of this survey, this little outline sketch of Israel's literature?—for we began with the little songs, and here are we with the wide visions of the book of Daniel. It is indeed a far cry between these two points, and between them lie all the wonder of the divine revelations through priests and prophets and wise men, and diverse as they all are, they nevertheless form a unity. The many books have become one book, and that book is well called the Book, the Bible.

Suggestions for Study

An enormous literature has grown up covering the field which this last chapter has as its province, and the very greatness of it makes the giving of advice extremely difficult. I divide the books into classes after a rather loose scheme.

(a) Books of more general application:

The Worker and His Bible, by F. C. Eiselen and W. C. Barclay; *The Bible, Its Origin, Its Significance and Its Abiding Worth*, by A. S. Peake

(a book of great value, interesting, instructive, helpful); *Sixty Years with the Bible*, by W. N. Clarke (a record of personal experience).

(b) Books specifically concerning the age and authorship of the Old Testament books:

The Literature of the Old Testament, by George Foot Moore; *A Critical Introduction to the Old Testament*, by G. B. Gray (the best book in brief compass). *The Books of the Pentateuch*, by Frederick Carl Eiselen; *The Psalms and Other Sacred Writings*, by Frederick Carl Eiselen. (These two books belong to a Biblical Introduction Series, and a third volume on the Prophets by the same author is in preparation. They are admirable.) *Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament*, by S. R. Driver (the standard book for serious students who have passed beyond the elements of the subject).

THE LAST WORD

THERE'S always a last word, and often it is a sad word. This is the last word in this little book, and you and I, dear reader, must here part company, perhaps never again to renew it. We have been together in the company of great men, of mighty princes, and eloquent speakers for God, and goodly persons of other kinds. In a world like this 'tis well to have good company in the quiet hours, and there will be long search for greater company than the company of Moses, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the rest. The hope and purpose of this little book, this very humble little book, is to take you gently by the hand and lead you into the presence of these great men. If you have not been enabled even to see these men the poor little book has failed, but if you have seen them even dimly, or a very little better than ever before, the book has served its mission; it was really worth while, and you may let it slip away into the oblivion without giving the author a pang. It was not written for scholars. There is no pretense of high achievement in it; there are no revolutionary discoveries on its modest pages. Many might have written it as well and some much better.

But it aimed still a little higher than merely introducing you to these great men. It was intended to incite you to know them better, to know them for yourself, to judge them upon your own estimate, and that means the study of the big books, some of which are mentioned at the ends of the chapters. You should desire to read in these big books. You need not accept what this little book says of any of these men, but would do better to get the big books, the great books. Have no fear of them. Not everything in them is to be accepted. Take what is useful to you and leave the rest; perhaps some day you will return to take some of that which you left before. Remember that you can learn more from a great man when he is wrong than from a little man when he is right. Study the great books by the great men, and increase in knowledge and power.

But higher yet did this little book aim, it had a most earnest purpose to send you to the Bible itself—to rise above this book, to the great handbooks to biblical knowledge, and then far above them to the great highways, the wide rivers, the lofty mountains, the sweet meadows of Holy Writ. Go see for yourself, God speaks there. Go try what is said in all the books, whether they be as little as this or great as the greatest; go try all that is in them by the dear old Book itself. There is naught to equal it, or ever will be. If all that ever was written about

it were gone, and it remained alone, we still were rich. You are rich, for it is yours to mark, learn and inwardly digest. Take it up in your hand and make it yours, remembering the old verses:

"If thou art merry, here are airs,
If melancholy, here are prayers;
If studious, here are those things writ
Which may deserve thy ablest wit;
If hungry, here is food divine;
If thirsty, nectar, heavenly wine.
. . . . . .
Read then, but first thyself prepare
To read with zeal and mark with care;
And when thou read'st what here is writ
Let thy best practice second it;
So twice each precept writ should be,
First in the Book, and then in thee."

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